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ABSTRACT

These newsletters are produced by Voices for Illinois Children, a child advocacy group that works to make kids "count" in Illinois and to ensure that the basic needs of all children, families, and communities are met. The spring 1996 issue provides membership information and network news, as well as articles addressing the following topics: (1) improvement of early education and child care; (2) making communities stronger; (3) preventing problems and bettering the lives of children; (4) welfare reform; (5) Illinois' deficit problems; (6) block grants; (7) early intervention; (8) improving school funding; and (9) preventive health care. The summer 1996 issue contains articles which address the following issues: (1) community state partnerships; (2) children in poverty; (3) early education; (4) at-risk children; and (5) the 1996 state legislative session. The issue also provides results of the annual benefit, membership information, and an interview with a teenager overcoming the odds to succeed in school. The winter 1996-97 issue contains articles on the following issues: (1) Healthy Families America program; (2) education funding; (3) welfare to work; and (4) youth crime prevention. This issue also provides the annual report for the organization, advocacy resources, network news, and membership information. (SD)

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VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN

VOICES

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Volume 8, Number 1 Spring 1996
A Publication of Voices for Illinois Children

Five-year-old Adam Brown, from the Valeska Hinton Early Education Center in Peoria, looks up to his kindergarten teacher Valerie Timmes. "It's amazing what little minds can do when you engage them young," the 23-year teacher said. For more from Timmes, see page 6.

Fight for early education, child care continues

The campaign to better prepare Illinois children for school by improving early education and child care is moving forward on two fronts.

In the final days of the 1995 fall veto session, Senate Bill 377 — commonly known as the Ready to Learn bill — was defeated in a parliamentary move by the Illinois House of Representatives leadership. House leaders appeared to be responding to intense pressure from the extreme right.

In 1996, Voices for Illinois Children and a broad coalition of supporters are pursuing legislative and public awareness efforts to help children in the earliest years of their lives.

Continued on Page 3

As we went to press: Education amendment

Voices called for putting the proposed education funding amendment on the November ballot -- and allowing voters to participate in the debate over improving school financing and reducing property taxes. Our recent Action Alert urged advocates to contact their state legislators, demanding that action on education be taken soon. For more details, call Voices at (312) 456-0600.

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Do you bowl alone?

Nancy Stevenson

Robert Putnam, a Harvard sociologist, recently documented a new phenomena. Americans are bowling now more than ever. But instead of bowling in leagues or groups, more people are bowling alone.

Research suggests this trend stretches beyond just local bowling alleys. Americans are losing their sense of community, so much in fact that one out of two Americans doesn't even know his or her next-door neighbor's name or phone number.

While Mr. Putnam predicts individualism will be a flood tide, let us recognize — and celebrate — some strong counter currents. People are concerned about their communities and the 3.3 million children in Illinois. From the calls and questions Voices receives, we know that people do want to help kids.

Voices is emphasizing ten positive steps each of us, whether community member, business leader, worker or policy maker, can make. Combined, these individual efforts — as small as registering to vote or spending time with a child — can become a powerful force for rebuilding communities.

One needs only to look at Chicago's near north side to see the impact a few lending hands can carry. Volunteers tutor Cabrini Green elementary students one-on-one in the Working in the Schools (WITS) tutor-mentor program. One volunteer recently told a friend,"The kids are so eager to learn. My time there makes me feel so good."

And the program works for the kids, too. Teachers report real

progress, increased motivation and a new found curiosity for learning among participating students. It's amazing what a difference "sacrificing" a few hours a week can produce.

But, just as community dissolution goes beyond bowling alone, community building must go beyond individual acts. Alone, we cannot dig the foundation and create the needed support beams for strong communities and better families.

When Voices holds community forums about what people want for their children [see Making Communities Stronger, page 5], participants talk about improving schools, ensuring safety, finding transportation and providing opportunities for work.

Institutions, whether business, philanthropic or public, need to strengthen rather than undermine communities. Instead of mass lay offs and educational cuts, working families need quality health care, stronger early childhood education and jobs that pay a living wage.

Governor Jim Edgar recognized the need for building communities in his State of the State address. Numerous national leaders, including the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kraft Foods, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Chicago Community Trust have wrestled with reformulating community structures and civic partnerships to meet the demands of a new federalism and community needs.

Voices for Illinois Children will be utilizing all of our activities to feature communities and community involvement in early child care, state finances, the delivery of social services, welfare reform and child welfare.

Yes, kids face huge obstacles today and, yes, people are going to bowl alone. "Let them," I say. You and I have bigger projects to tackle. We've got communities to build and students to tutor.

The bottom line remains no matter how big a bowler you are. Picking up a bowling ball will never compare with the rewards of picking up a healthy, happy four-year old.

Nancy Stevenson is Voices' managing director. ■

Improving early education, child care

Continued from Page 1

"The idea of preventing problems before they happen is a common-sense notion," said Voices' President Jerry Stermer. "But, Illinois still hasn't fully embraced this concept. Half of our pre-school aged children who need Head Start or similar programs can't participate because there isn't enough room for them. At the same time, many excellent early childhood programs are out of sync with working families. Parents need quality all-day, year-round programs that combine early education with child care."

A Better Start

Voices for Illinois Children and other groups are pursuing a two-part campaign to improve early education and child care.

Legislative Efforts

"SUCCEED"
to improve the quality of early education and child care.

"Thriving Children, Striving Families"
to improve access to child care.

Public Awareness Efforts

Statewide public speaking bureau to inform people and local policymakers about the importance of combining early education and child care.

Legislative efforts

Voices, the Day Care Action Council and the statewide coalition of organizations that assisted the Governor's Work Group on Early Childhood are supporting two pieces of legislation: one focused on improving quality and the second focused on improving access to child care.

The first measure — known as "Steps to Unite Child Care and Early Education Demonstration" — continues to challenge Illinois to improve the quality of early childhood programs.

Under the measure, any day care center, child care home serving infants and toddlers, Head Start or pre-kindergarten which voluntarily complies with performance standards for high quality child care would be able to qualify as a SUCCEED program and receive incentive grants. To make pre-kindergarten available for working parents, a Full-Time Pre-Kindergarten Demonstration Program also would be established.

In addition, the legislation creates a model Welfare-to-Work Self-Employment Project, which would recruit people who receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to become child care home providers. The measure would help them become licensed, meet performance standards and join a network of other child care providers as a means to obtaining self-sufficiency.

The second legislative initiative is a blueprint for streamlined delivery of child day care, called "Thriving Children, Striving Families," with the central goal of expanding access to child care.

The legislation is based on the expectation that changes in federal law and block grants will make it possible for Illinois to examine the basic elements of our child care delivery system: who qualifies for child care subsidies; how much the state pays and how much the parent pays; and how Illinois maintains and expands the infrastructure that supports the system.

The centerpiece of "Thriving Children, Striving Families" is a new policy that would provide state assistance for child care to all families at or below a low income level — 60 percent of median income. This legislation recognizes that Illinois cannot truly accomplish the goals of welfare reform unless we are prepared to offer child care to low-income, working families while they work.

"SUCCEED and Thriving Children are the one-two punch Illinois must make to help working families and their children," Stermer said.

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Improving early education, child care

Continued from Page 3

Public awareness efforts

Most brain development occurs before a child reaches four years old. A child's ability to learn can increase — or decrease — by 25 percent or more depending on whether the child grows up in a stimulating environment.

The Illinois system of care and education for children between the ages of birth and five years doesn't begin to address these fundamental facts.

"Children living in poverty are particularly vulnerable," noted Voices' Project Director Carol Dellahousaye. "They are most likely to fall between the cracks of a fragmented, inaccessible system, arriving at school unprepared to learn and leaving school having learned too little."

Voices — with support from the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation — is recruiting and training a public speaking team to discuss these issues at local forums such as school council, PTA and Chamber of Commerce meetings. As part of the project, Voices will evaluate the impact of the public awareness activities, as well.

"As the Governor's Work Group on Early Childhood pointed out more than a year ago, our system of early childhood care and education needs an overhaul," Dellahousaye said. "The speakers bureau will help take our case to the public." ■

Make your voice heard

Here are two easy steps you can take to improve early education and child care.

First, discuss the matter with your legislators, as well as with the two leaders of the Illinois General Assembly: House Speaker Lee Daniels and Senate President James "Pate" Philip. Letters can be addressed to: State Capitol, Springfield, IL 62706.

Second, invite an expert to talk about early education and child care with your local school council, PTA meeting, Chamber of Commerce meeting, etc. To invite a speaker, contact: Mike Roach, Communications Associate, Voices for Illinois Children, 208 S. LaSalle, Suite 1580, Chicago, IL 60604. Phone: (312) 456-0600. Fax: (312) 456-0088.

Timeline: Improving Early Education and Child Care

Sen. Frank Watson

1990 — Voices publishes "Success Starts Young."

1992 — Voices publishes "All Our Children Can Make the Grade."

1994 — Voices works with Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation to convene early childhood symposium. State Senator Frank Watson (R-Carlyle) participates.

Sen. Watson introduces legislation to create the Governor's Work Group on Early Childhood.

Gov. Edgar appoints Sen. Watson, Voices President Jerry Stermer and Erikson Institute President Barbara Bowman to co-chair the Work Group.

1995 — Sen. Watson incorporates the Work Group's recommendations into Senate Bill 377. The bill is passed by the Illinois Senate

Rep. Verna Clayton (R-Buffalo Grove) co-sponsors the bill in the Illinois House, where it also is approved.

In an amendatory veto, Gov. Edgar approves the bill with some changes.

In the fall veto session, the Senate approves Gov. Edgar's changes, but the House fails to call the measure for a vote — thereby killing the bill.

1996 — "SUCCEED" and "Thriving Children, Striving Families" are introduced.

Speakers bureau is launched.

Making communities stronger

Valerie Hall, a school bus driver from Freeport, never attended a community meeting before.

"I got really nervous when I heard the mayor was coming," the mother of four said about Voices' recent co-sponsored roundtable in Freeport. "But after listening and then telling my story, I realized people — even those high up like the mayor — care about kids. We need more of these meetings. They challenge people to think and feel."

Hall and nearly 500 other Illinois residents — from state legislators, business owners and mayors to farmers, teachers and parents — recently took part in 14 community roundtable forums across the state.

The discussions are part of a unique public-private collaborative effort called the Campaign for Illinois Communities. Voices has partnered with the Governor's Task Force on Human Services Reform, Kraft Foods and the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory to build community capacity and to gain input from local residents about making human services more effective and efficient.

The roundtables were held in towns and neighborhoods from Freeport to Quincy and Springfield to Waukegan. During the facilitated sessions, 25-30 local residents were asked to envision their ideal community and discuss how to make those ideals happen.

"Every discussion differed from the next," Susan Frankel Perlin, Voices' project coordinator, said. "In the Southern Seven Counties, people focused on defining the 'necessary things' individuals need. In Rock Island, participants struggled with connecting communities divided by state lines and in Peoria the dialogue revolved around developing jobs that pay livable wages."

A mutual respect among participants also seemed to develop at each roundtable, Frankel Perlin said.

"State legislators listened intently to Head Start parents and school administrators brainstormed better public transportation options with city officials. Everyone seemed to check their title at the door and engage in the conversation," she added.

Scott McNally, the organizer of the Albany Park neighborhood roundtable in Chicago, was impressed by the real cross section of the community who attended the forum.

"The roundtable brought some players to the table who normally go unheard," he said. "Parents sat alongside city aldermen. Agency types talked with politicians.

"We concluded that our community has it own problems, challenges and strengths," McNally added. "Thirty-six different languages and dialects are spoken here in Albany Park. We're much different than a Waukegan or Rock Island. Our diversity is a strength, but it can also be a challenge."

Realizing local strengths and gathering local input were the goals of the roundtables, Voices' Senior Project Director Gaylord Gieseke said. "But the Campaign for Illinois Communities doesn't just end with the local discussions."

Representatives from the roundtables, along with state and local government officials, will participate in a statewide symposium April 26-27 in Oak Brook.

B.J. Walker, of the Governor's Task Force on Human Services Reform

"The symposium, which will expand on the roundtable discussions, will allow participants to provide input and voice their concerns to policy makers on the design and delivery of human services in Illinois," Gieseke said. "Those in attendance will learn the latest human services reform ideas proposed on the national and state levels and they will work to identify strategies which will meet the challenges of service delivery at the local level."

For more information about the Campaign for Illinois Communities, phone Susan Frankel Perlin, Voices' Project Coordinator at (312) 456-0600. ■

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Building a better future

You can safely call Valerie Timmes' kindergarten class creative.

In the past 10 months, the 24 five- and six year-olds turned their classroom into a bowling alley, an opera house and a grocery store complete with working check-out lanes, miniature shopping carts and real produce.

Timmes, a 23-year teaching veteran smiles, shaking her head. "It's amazing what little minds can do when you engage them young," she says.

Timmes teaches at the Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center in Peoria. The center is among a dozen "real life" strategies-at-work outlined in Voices' 1995 Illinois Kids Count report.

Only a couple of years ago, Peoria school district officials began noticing their students weren't getting the early education they needed prior to first grade. The community responded by creating the $7 million early education center.

Researchers from around the country now flock to Peoria to attempt to duplicate the center's success in their hometowns.

"We're getting it right for one reason," Ken Hinton, the Center's principal, said. "The people who care about kids in this community — their parents, teachers, school officials and even future employers — are working together. The elements that make the Hinton Center work aren't only in Peoria. They're in every community in every state."

Building on things that work for kids, like the Hinton Center, is the main focus of this year's Kids Count report. Along with county-by-county breakdowns of child well-being in Illinois, Voices' fourth annual report outlines eight basic strategies that better the lives of children in Illinois.

The eight strategies, or "building blocks," are: start early to prevent problems; tailor schools for today's students; link efforts for effectiveness; invigorate communities to make them stronger; establish one-on-one relationships with kids; build bridges from welfare to work; advocate for at-risk kids in the court system; and promote family-friendly workplaces.

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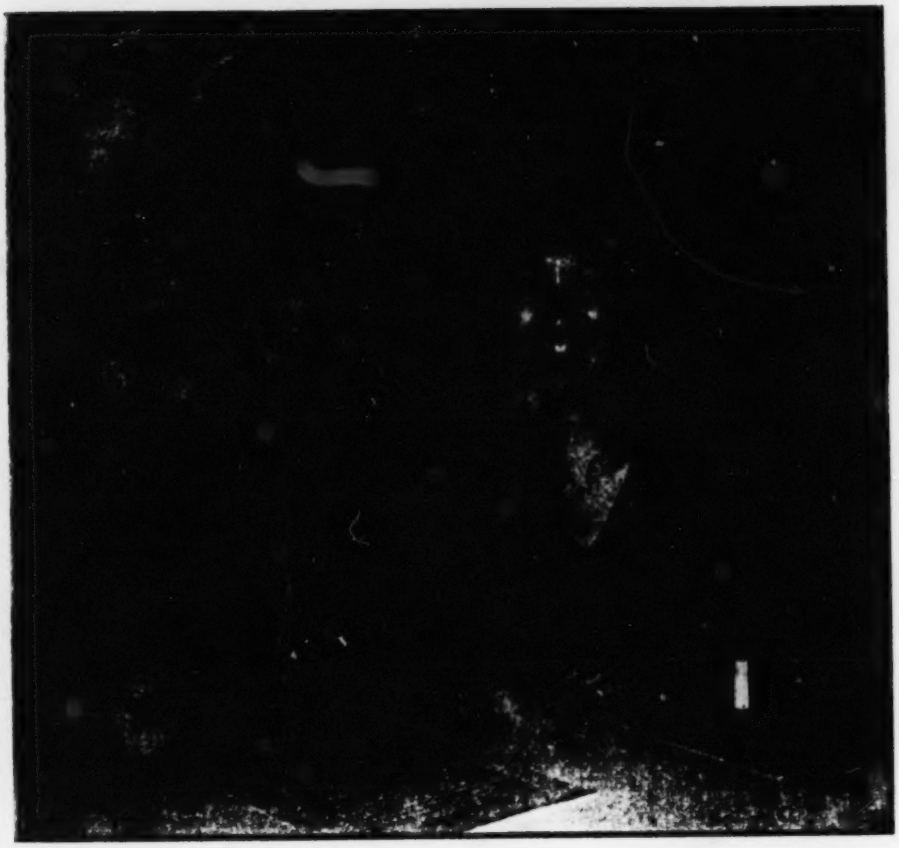
10 things you can do

You don't have to open a state-of-the-art child care center or run for office to improve the life of a child in Illinois. You can simply:

Spend time with a child
Register to vote and vote wisely
Join a tutor or mentor program
Organize a neighborhood meeting to discuss the needs of children in your community
Encourage family-friendly policies in your workplace
Volunteer in a classroom or after-school program
Write your legislators on a children's issue
Donate old books to a local library or child care center
Keep an eye out for kids in your neighborhood
Join Voices for Illinois Children and add your voice to hundreds of others speaking up for kids

Building a better future



Becoming a tutor or mentor is one way to make a difference in the life of a child. Tenth grader Anita Gunartt (left) shares a laugh with her volunteer tutor Donna Giampietro on Chicago's north side.

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"Everything we do today will greatly affect our children tomorrow," Voices President Jerry Stermer said. "We need to keep these eight fundamental principles in mind as we change government, social programs and even go about our everyday lives.

Along with the building blocks, the Kids Count research also revealed that Illinois possesses the Midwest's highest per capita income, but also the region's highest percentage of children living in poverty.

During 1994, 14 out of every 1,000 -- more than 42,000 -- children in Illinois were abused or neglected. That's a 22 percent jump from 1993.

Illinois also lacks sufficient quality early education and child care. The state's two main programs, Head Start and state-funded pre-kindergarten, only enroll half of the eligible kids in Illinois.

"There are many success stories like the Hinton Center out there," Voices' Managing Director Nancy Stevenson said. "And we need to build on them. But there also are many children out there who don't have a Valerie Timmes in their lives. To reach these kids, we must do a better job of investing in early childhood education, strengthening families and moving parents from welfare to work."

To order a copy of the 1995 Illinois Kids Count report or a summary booklet, contact: Voices for Illinois Children, 208 S. LaSalle, Suite 1580, Chicago, IL 60604. Phone: (312) 456-0600. Fax: (312) 456-0088. The complete report costs $15 for non-members and $12 for members. The summary booklet is free.

Voices' work on Kids Count is supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation. ■

Speak up for kids

Voices for Illinois Children is activating a statewide speakers bureau to spread the word about Kids Count. If you would like to receive a sample Kids Count speech and other public speaking materials — or, if you would like to invite a Voices' speaker to talk about Kids Count at one of your meetings, phone Mike Roach, Voices' Communications Associate at (312) 456-0600.

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Playing a role in welfare reform

With talk of welfare reform circulating in Illinois and throughout the nation, we recently spoke with Voices' President Jerry Stermer to put some of these issues into perspective. Before joining Voices in 1987, Stermer worked in both the Illinois executive branch and the state legislature. He currently serves on the board of the National Association of Child Advocates and works with a number of collaborative advocacy efforts in Illinois, including Work, Welfare and Families.

Q: What's welfare reform really all about?

A: That depends a lot on your point of view and your objectives. At Voices, we believe that effective reform of the welfare system must mean increased economic security for children and their parents. More families need strong bridges between welfare and decent jobs.

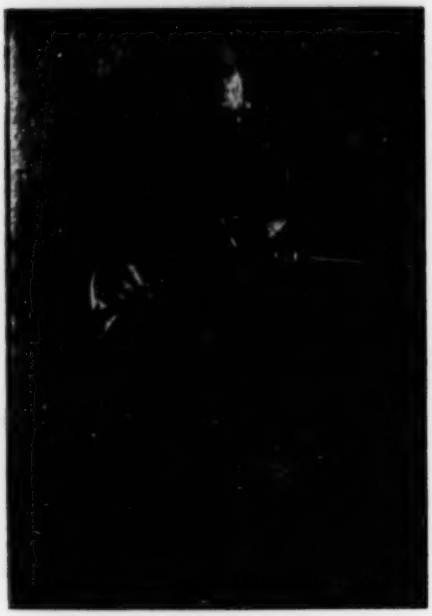
Any reform idea should be about child care, job training, earned income credits and other supports.

Q: There seems to be a lot of talk, but little action. Will Washington table welfare reform until next November?

A: Tabled or not, there is plenty of welfare reform work for child advocates in Illinois.

We need to ensure that successful state reforms like Work Pays and the Teen Parent Initiative are not only preserved, but strengthened. We must also strive for increased capacity and quality in child care programs.

Most importantly, we need to speak out for children. Any proposed



Jerry Stermer

changes, and there will be many, must leave children better off, not worse off, than the current system.

Q: What do you really expect out of Springfield?

A: Most likely, Illinois will receive fewer federal dollars next year. When budget battles ensue, it will be vital for advocates to focus on child care and job training, which have been historically underfunded in Illinois.

If we are truly serious about welfare reform, we must increase spending in these two key areas.

We must also guarantee that the Work Pays policy remains at the center of Illinois' welfare reform agenda.

Work Pays, launched by the Edgar administration in 1993, is the single most successful policy strategy affecting low income households that we've seen in decades. The number of families combining work with welfare nearly tripled from 14,000 in 1993 to almost 40,000 last year.

The Teen Parent Initiative is another must-save program. This relatively new approach is based on a unique partnership between teen moms and the welfare agency.

Mothers agree to complete high school. In return, they not only receive cash assistance but also child care and the one-on-one support of a community agency advocate who helps them balance their responsibilities as mothers and students.

Q: Governor Edgar has proposed a re-design of the state's human services agencies. How will this affect children?

A: The Governor has said he will issue an executive order sometime around April 1st to create a new consolidated human services agency within state government. This proposal has the potential to facilitate the integration of many separate programs and could even result in a more efficient way of doing things.

State agencies could potentially all use the same computer system, the same regional boundaries and even common intake forms. When efficiencies translate into better services, children, families and taxpayers can all be winners. There is also the important potential that a redesigned system of human services could interact more clearly with local communities and local leadership which also could have positive outcomes for children. Voices for Illinois Children strongly supports the concept of integration

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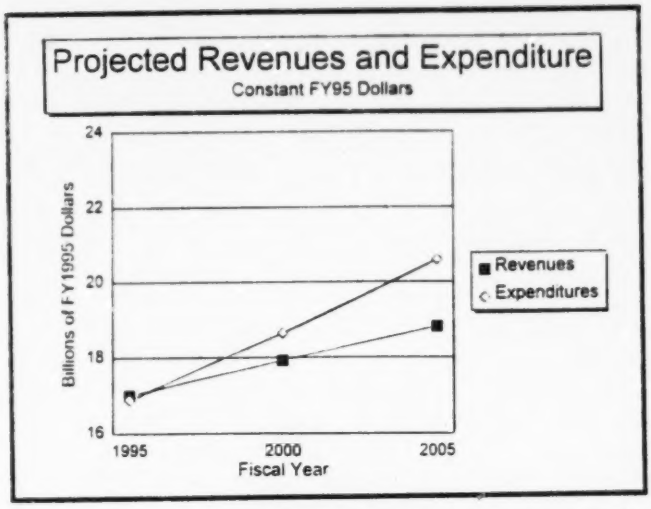
Balancing act: Illinois' 'deficit dilemma'

Although Illinois can balance its budget from year to year, our state's future revenues will fall well short of expenses, a recent report reveals.

This structural gap could soar above $1.8 billion by the year 2005, according to research conducted by Fred Giertz, Therese McGuire and Jim Nowlan at the University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs.

A revenue short fall is nothing new to Illinois, the study, called "Deficit Dilemma," found. In year's past, state officials cut social services, delayed Medicaid payments, raised existing tobacco and gasoline taxes and used other financial gimmicks to combat revenue short falls.

"We are all for cutting waste when and wherever possible," notes Ami Nagle, state finances project director at Voices for Illinois Children. "But this report shows that balancing the budget goes far beyond just reducing spending. We could fire every employee from the state's eight largest agencies and still not be able to meet the projected gap for 2005. This structural deficit must be addressed by changing Illinois' revenue generating system."



Illinois isn't the only state facing an on-going shortfall, McGuire reports.

"Other states are also attempting to meet 21st century spending demands with 20th century revenue systems," the economist said. "Until spending and revenue policies are redesigned, states like Illinois will continue to lurch from one budget difficulty to the next."

Support for "Deficit Dilemma" was provided by Voices for Illinois Children, Progress Illinois and the Coalition for Education Rights. To order a copy of the report, contact Voices. To order an audio tape interview with the authors, contact the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at (217) 333-0364.

Welfare reform

Continued from Page 8

of human services. But at the same time, we are concerned. Vital support strategies designed to help prevent family breakdown, school failure and delinquency must not get lost in the workings of a "mega-agency."

We believe the idea of involving community leaders in the design and delivery of human services is fundamental to any positive restructuring. This can work well for such things as early intervention services for children with developmental delays or children who are at risk of such delays. It also works with child care resource and referral and "Healthy Families" programs. As a result of hard work by advocates and government officials we have many effective and important public private partnerships working on these programs today. The restructuring needs to build on those gains and not allow them to be lost in the shuffle.

Q: How can the average person concerned about kids play a role?

A: Along with his announcement about restructuring, Governor Edgar signaled his interest in hearing from people about his proposal. Consumers of human services along with representatives of associations of service providers and advocacy groups were invited to participate in a series of focus groups to explore reactions to the proposal and to offer input. I think it would be good for people to write directly to the governor to express their ideas about the proposed reorganization.

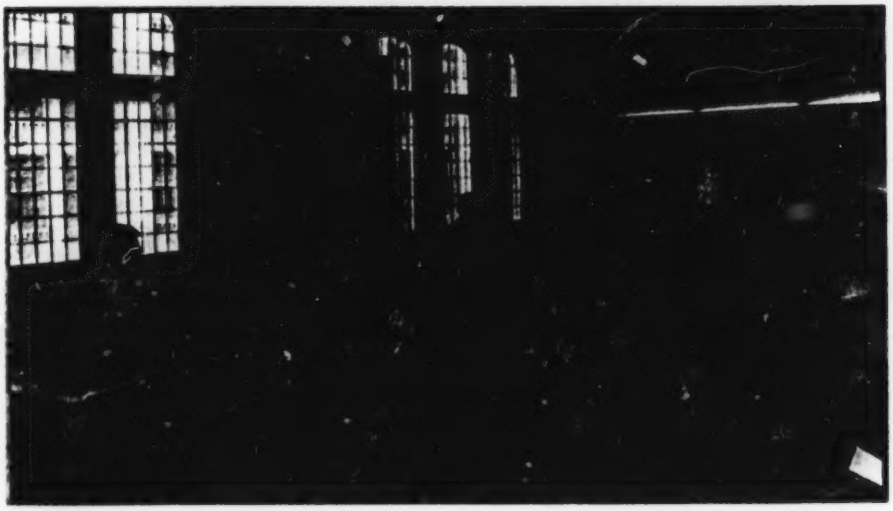
Making progress for children

For good or for ill, changes underway across the country and throughout Illinois will dramatically affect children and their families -- especially poor children. Now, perhaps more than ever, children need strong voices speaking up for their concerns. Here is a recap of recent Voices advocacy efforts — efforts that otherwise would have been impossible without the help of many people and organizations across Illinois.

(Left to Right): State Rep. Louis Lang (D-Skokie), Voices' Projects Director Gaylord Gieseke, State Rep. Douglas Hoeft (R- Elgin)

Understanding block grants

For the past several months, federal lawmakers have debated restructuring nearly 300 social programs into a few "block grants" — lump sum payments that would be administered by individual states.



Medicaid breakout session

About 200 Illinois residents — advocates, community leaders, care providers, legislators and foundation executives — recently learned more about the possible ramifications of such changes at a conference titled, "Making Block Grants Work in Illinois." The session was co-sponsored by The Donors Forum of Chicago, the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois.

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"Voices for Illinois Children champions the full development of every child in Illinois. Voices is particularly concerned about those children who are vulnerable because of poverty, discrimination, ill-health or family stress."

—from the Voices mission statement

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Making progress

Joe Antolin, Illinois Department of Public Aid

U.S. Rep. Jerry Weller (R-Morris)

Fel-Pro Chairman Emeritus Elliot Lehman

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the Junior League of Chicago and Voices for Illinois Children.

U.S. Rep Jerry Weller (R-Morris) gave the keynote address. Three other speakers who provided their views from the national perspective included: Cindy Mann, of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities; Matt Stagner, of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and Samuel Flint, Ph.D., of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Voices' work on state finances is supported by the Woods Fund of Chicago and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

For more information, phone Voices' Project Director Ami Nagle at (312) 456-0600.

Supporting early intervention

U.S. District Court Judge Charles P. Kocoras recently ruled that the State of Illinois unlawfully denies critical educational and therapeutic services to infants and toddlers with disabilities. In a lawsuit filed on behalf of families of infants and toddlers with disabilities, Judge Kocoras issued summary judgment in favor of the families and against state officials.

"I'm thrilled," said Kathy Breault, the mother of one of the named plaintiffs, Joanna. "It's too late for my daughter, Joanna, but hopefully the other children in the state will now be able to get the help they need."

Voices began advocating on behalf of children with developmental delays in 1989 when the organization co-sponsored with the Chicago Community Trust a statewide conference entitled "Building at the Frontier: Policy Choices for Young Children at Risk."

The families named in the lawsuit were represented by the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and by attorneys from Sonnenschein, Nath & Rosenthal.

"Early intervention works," said Karen Berman, from the Chicago Lawyers' Committee. "It makes tremendous difference in school readiness and lifetime productivity. Helping these children at the earliest possible

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Making progress

Continued from Page 11

moment is a no-lose proposition for the children, their families and the taxpayers."

In 1987, Illinois opted to participate in the early intervention program. Since then, Illinois has received more than $34 million in federal funds. Early intervention is designed to minimize developmental delay and help families meet the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities. The lawsuit alleged that thousands of children eligible for early intervention services — because of such problems as cerebral palsy, prenatal brain injury, stroke, deafness and Down's Syndrome are not receiving federally required early intervention services, including physical, speech and occupational therapies, education, family counseling and social work.

"The families of the disabled children of Illinois have something to celebrate today," said Jill Thompson Calian, of Sonnenschein, Nath & Rosenthal. "The Court declared that it is unacceptable, if not tragic, to have disabled infants and toddlers languishing on waiting lists for early intervention services. We hope that this decision marks the end of this tragedy."

For more information, phone Voices Project Director Ami Nagle at (312) 456-0600.

Improving school funding

Voices for Illinois Children recently testified before a blue-ribbon committee appointed by Gov. Jim Edgar to address equity and fairness in funding elementary and secondary education.

Early intervention is designed to minimize developmental delay and help families meet the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities.

The committee — headed by Stanley Ikenberry, the former president of the University of Illinois and a former member of Voices' Board of Directors — recently released its recommendations.

"Assurance of a quality education is a child's basic right," testified Voices' Project Director Ami Nagle. "Developing a higher minimum of adequate funding brings the state a long way toward ensuring that right. However, addressing the need for more revenues in education must be placed in the larger context of addressing the problems of the state finance system."

Nagle summarized Voices' position in two points. First, to remedy the education system, Illinois must increase funding through statewide sources to schools that are currently spending below the Legislative Task Force's minimum adequacy level, while simultaneously reducing the reliance on property tax. Second, the income tax system must be restructured to provide adequate funds for the needs of Illinois families and communities, as well as to reduce the burden on low income working families.

For more information, phone Voices' Project Director Ami Nagle at (312) 456-0600.

Nurturing 'Future Leaders'

Future Leaders Chicago is a new program for Chicago-area high school juniors who have demonstrated strong community leadership and a commitment to volunteerism.

The first class of 30 students who have been chosen to participate in this innovative educational training program are: learning about various communities and how the challenges facing those communities affect the Chicago area; meeting with prominent business, philanthropic, government and religious leaders to learn how their organizations affect the community; making site visits to organizations throughout Chicago that have an impact in areas of interest to the participants; and are being monitored by adults whose careers demonstrate many ways to become community leaders.

Nomination information for the next class of students will be available in the next few months.

Future Leaders Chicago is sponsored by The Chicago Community Trust, Golden Apple Foundation, Leadership Greater

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Making progress

Chicago, Ronald McDonald Children's Charities and Voices for Illinois Children.

For more information, contact Voices' Managing Director Nancy Stevenson at (312) 456-0600.

Ensuring preventive health care

Many private health insurance plans still do not cover basic preventive services for children.

Voices has joined a strong coalition to support Illinois House Bill 2624, the Children's Health Insurance Reform Proposal (CHIRP), which would provide preventive health care benefits for children of working families without burdening taxpayers.

If passed by the Illinois General Assembly, CHIRP would require health insurance companies that are regulated by the State of Illinois to provide full coverage for preventive services to children younger than six years old. Those services include immunizations and screening for lead, anemia, scoliosis or abnormalities in growth and development. Currently, only about half of the conventional insurance plans cover comprehensive primary care for children.

Voices supports the measure for three basic reasons.

First, children are suffering. Every day, thousands of children suffer from totally preventable illnesses.

Second, preventive care saves lives and money. Society can save as much as $30 for every $1 spent on childhood immunizations, according to U.S. Assistant Secretary of Health Philip Lee, M.D.

Voices has joined a strong coalition to support Illinois House Bill 2624, the Children's Health Insurance Reform Proposal (CHIRP), which would provide preventive health care benefits for children of working families without burdening taxpayers.

Third, Illinois taxpayers are currently footing the bill for these services. Reports indicate that many private physicians refer insured patients to overburdened public health clinics for free or low-cost immunizations.

For more information, phone Michael Burke, Voices' Communication Director, at (312) 456-0600.

Keeping families strong

Illinois is now among the top six states in development of service sites for Healthy Families America — an initiative which features voluntary home visiting services for new parents who are at-risk of abusing or neglecting their children.

Nationwide, there are 148 Healthy Families sites in 27 states and the District of Columbia. In Illinois, work is underway in 10 sites.

Healthy Families America is a national movement spearheaded by the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse in partnership with Ronald McDonald Children's Charities. The initiative is based on a Hawaii model program, which consistently brought about dramatic reductions in physical abuse and neglect rates from that expected among high-risk families.

In our state, the Healthy Families Illinois Work Group — co-chaired by Voices for Illinois Children and the Illinois Department of Public Health — is working to oversee and broaden implementation of this effort in Illinois. The 10 sites in Illinois include: From Day One (Chicago); Chicago Urban League (Chicago); West Side Future (Chicago); Winfield Moody Health Center (Chicago); Visiting Nurse Association of Fox Valley (Aurora); North Lawndale HFA (Chicago); Chicago Dept. of Health (Chicago); Humboldt Park Infant Mortality Eduction Initiative (Chicago); Henry Booth House (Chicago); and the Adolescent Health Center (Carbondale).

For more information, phone Voices' Senior Projects Director Gaylord Gieseke at (312) 456-0600.

Come 'Stand for Children'

Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, recently urged all Illinoisans to participate in Stand For Children — a mass, non-partisan gathering for children on June 1 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

"This is a defining time for our nation — and for our children," Edelman said. "The choices we make as parents, community leaders and citizens in this last national election year of the 20th century will shape our nation's fate and our children's fate. Every American who cares about children must stand up and be counted."

Edelman spoke to nearly 400 people at an Illinois kick-off rally organized by Voices for Illinois Children and hosted by Harris Trust and Savings Bank in Chicago. "Stand For Children will be a day for the people of Illinois and all Americans to celebrate and affirm our responsibility — as individuals, as families and as communities — to improve the lives of our youngest neighbors," Edelman said.

"We must work to spread the word in every Illinois town that we must take a Stand For Children," said Voices' President Jerry Stermer. "We must organize and we must commit to attend this historic rally."

Hundreds of individuals, organizations, churches and unions in Illinois already have agreed to endorse Stand For Children. To learn how you can participate, contact: Voices for Illinois Children, 208 S. LaSalle St., Suite 1580, Chicago, IL 60604. Attn: Communications Associate Mike Roach -- (312) 456-0600.

At the kick-off rally: The Men's Chorus of the Chicago Children's Choir.

John Kesse

"Does America truly value children?"

John Kesse, a 14-year-old Chicagoan, used his introduction of Marian Wright Edelman to challenge adults to take part in Stand For Children.

"We are here today because Mrs. Edelman is calling for every American who cares for children to stand up and be counted on June 1," he said. "In making this call, she says it's time to ask the moral question, 'Does America truly value children?' When I was asked this question, my immediate answer was, 'No.'

"When I look at the quality of some children's lives around me, I think that no one cares. Most adults are all talk and no action. For the sake of all the children like me who do not want to be left behind, please heed Mrs. Edelman's call — and Stand For Children."

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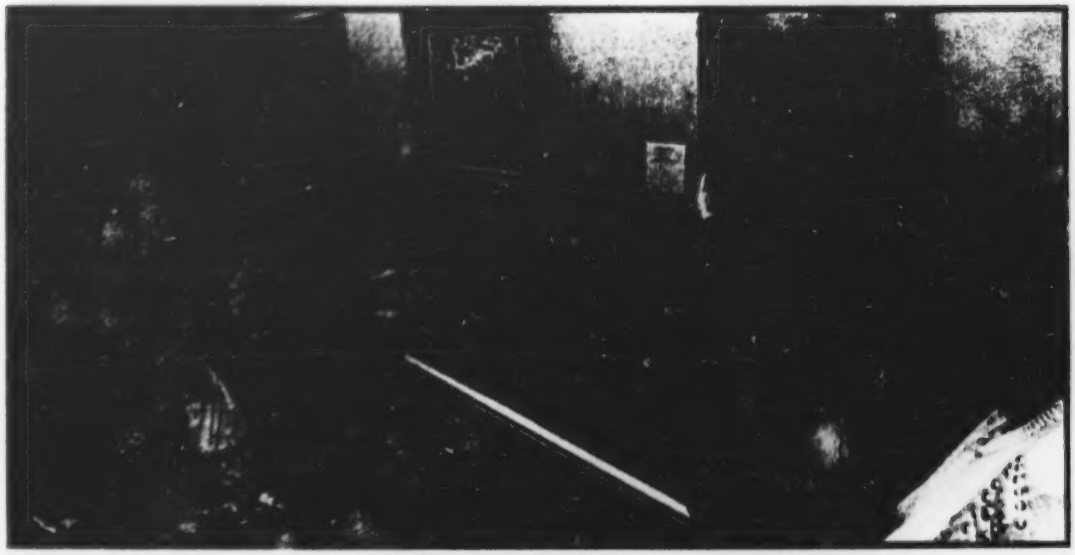
Monet benefit adds a little color to 400 lives

Although Melvin Pacheco lives four miles from the Loop, the 13 year-old never explored the Art Institute of Chicago before.

"This is way cool," the starry eyed eighth grader said at Voices' November private viewing of the Institute's Claude Monet mega exhibit. "This is even cooler than the Bears."



Art Institute volunteer docent Pat Tuffer discusses Monet's work with students from Chicago schools at a recent private showing arranged by Voices.

Thanks to the Bank of America and DePaul University's Center for Urban Education, 90 city students received docent guided tours of the 159 piece Monet showing. For all but a couple, it was their first visit to the museum.

The colorful reaction of the students, not to mention the more than 400 "grown up" attendees touched Voices' board member Mickie Silverstein.

"What a fantastic way, not only to introduce kids to the arts, but to also raise money for Voices," she said. "We couldn't be happier with the night's turnout."

Jimmy Nonato (right) and his art instructor Stephanie Shiff discuss Monet's stroke style. Nonato said he doesn't want to draw like Monet. "I want to own a Monet," he said.

Art Institute volunteer docent Sue Engelhart explains the many nuances of Monet's work. "We couldn't have asked for a better turn out," Voices' Board Member Mickie Silverstein said.

The showing, which was generously supported by John Nuveen Company and Bank of America, netted more than $18,000 for Voices. ■

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Rather, I want to point out that while we can talk about strengthening families, there will be little success until we also find a way to strengthen our communities. We profess homage to the well-worn aphorism that it takes a village to raise a child. But where in the case of these boys — and ultimately in the case of Eric Morse — was the village?

It takes a village to destroy a child

Alex Kotlowitz

The crime is so heinous it makes me shake with anger. In the early evening hours of October 13, 1994, two boys, 10 and 11 years old, dangled and then dropped 5-year-old Eric Morse from the 14th floor of a Chicago public housing complex, because Eric wouldn't steal candy for them.

His killers displayed no remorse. In court, the younger of the two, who could barely see the judge above the partition, mouthed obscenities at reporters covering the trial. Last week, they became the youngest offenders ever sent to prison in Illinois. And they have come to symbolize the so-called super-predators, children accused of maiming or killing without a second thought.

Unsurprisingly, both boys had fathers who were in prison. One had a mother who, according to school records, repeatedly missed counseling sessions. The other mother, according to court records, battled a drug addiction. I don't mention the parents of these children to excuse the crime. Nor do I mention this to state the obvious: In the absence of loving, nurturing, discipline-minded adults, children become

lost.

Rather, I want to point out that while we can talk about strengthening families, there will be little success until we also find a way to strengthen our communities. We profess homage to the well-worn aphorism that it takes a village to raise a child. But where in the case of these boys — and ultimately in the case of Eric Morse — was the village?

Let's take a look at the older of the two boys, whom I will call James. He attended the primary and intermediate J.R. Doolittle Schools, two buildings which butt up against the drab-looking Ida B. Wells public housing complex. According to school documents, James earned mediocre grades, mostly C's , and then in the third grade, when his father was arrested, his grades plunged. He couldn't sit still in class. He fought other students.

In fourth grade, the school ordered a psychological evaluation, which recommended only tutoring. That same year, he flunked every subject, including gym and music. Nonetheless, the school promoted him. The next year at his new school, he missed 23 days. Because of low marks, he repeated the fifth grade.

Why didn't the school administrators sense that something was amiss in this child's life? Part of the problem may be that the primary school of 700 students could afford only once-a-week visits by a psychologist and social worker. And truant officers were axed three years ago by the

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It takes a village

Continued from Page 16

financially strapped Chicago Public Schools.

One afternoon when James was on his way to pick up his cousin, he witnessed a gang member shoot and kill a rival. James was 9 at the time. His lawyer, Michelle Kaplan, said he was standing 10 feet from the victim. No adult offered him counseling. No one stepped in to make sure that such an incident didn't happen again.

In most communities, such an event would have brought quick attention. I'm reminded of the day in 1988, when Laurie Dann, a deranged woman, walked into an elementary school in Winnetka, Ill. and shot six children, killing an 8-year-old boy. Psychologists were brought in to counsel the students, their parents and teachers. The governor called for tighter school security. Some politicians demanded tougher gun control laws.

James received no such attention. In the six months before Eric's murder, the police arrested James eight times on relatively minor charges from shoplifting to possession of ammunition, presumably bullets. Each time the police released him.

After three arrests in one year, the police are supposed to — by their own guidelines -- refer a child to juvenile court in the hope that he or she might receive help. That was never done in James's case. "This was a child in crises," Ms. Kaplan said. "Here's an 11-year-old child who was expressing in the only way a child can that something's wrong."

Now the village vigorously debates not how we failed James but what we should do with him: Send him to a youth prison or to a residential center, where the emphasis is on rehabilitation? The judge who presided over this case, Carol Kelly, has a reputation for siding with the prosecution.

Indeed, she chose to send the two boys to prison, stipulating that they receive therapy. But when asked what could be learned from this case, Judge Kelly, says: "Let's focus on what brought them to this point. What happened to them? What didn't happen to them? What can we do so we don't have other Eric Morses?"

I'm haunted by one image in particular. When the two boys dropped Eric from the window, Eric's 8-year-old brother ran down the 14 flights as fast as he could. He later testified that he was hoping to catch Eric. Eric's brother did more than anyone else to try to save his little brother.

He and Eric are victims of James and his cohort -- and of the village guardians who failed them. James and his 10-year-old partner were not headed for trouble, they were well into it. Yet, no adult intervened.

These boys come from a neighborhood poor in spirit and resources. If we can't help rebuild their community, using schools as a foundation, we'll all end up running furiously down those stairs hoping, praying, that we can catch yet one more child dropped by their families and by the institutions that presumably serve them. It will almost always be too late.

Alex Kotlowitz is a writer from Oak Park and a voice for Illinois children. "Your Voice" invites you to submit an essay discussing children's issues. This essay is printed with permission from the New York Times. ■

Now the village vigorously debates not how we failed James but what we should do with him: Send him to a youth prison or to a residential center, where the emphasis is on rehabilitation?

Advocates speak up

Child advocates from East St. Louis and Moline to Mount Carmel and Rockford are vigorously speaking out for children. Here is an update of where some Voices' members, board and staff are working for kids.

Voices board member **Jeanette Bitter** and retired Quincy school principal **Paul Duker** recently presented a series of in-depth discussions to area churches on the well being of children in the greater Quincy Area.

Gaylord Gieseke, senior projects director, recently facilitated a panel discussion updating the progress of the Governor's Task Force for Human Services Reform. The dialogue was sponsored by the Donors Forum and held at the Monsignor John J. Egan Center in Chicago.

Martin Nesbitt, an Investment Manager at LaSalle Advisors and **Jeanne Crowley**, a Special Assistant to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, recently joined the Voices' Board of Directors. Both Jeanne and Martin are outspoken advocates for children. Martin is highly involved with the Boy Scouts and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Jeanne has dedicated her professional marketing and public relations career to bettering the lives of children.

Ed Williams, executive vice president of Harris Bank and nearly 400 other concerned Illinoisans pledged their support at Marian Wright Edeleman's recent Stand For Children kick off rally. The event was hosted by Harris Bank and sponsored by Voices. The national day of commitment, endorsed by Voices for Illinois Children and almost 1,000 other organizations, will be June 1 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

The Arlington Heights Daily Herald recently published a letter to the editor submitted by Voices member **Sue Walton** of Rolling Meadows. Sue's letter outlined the building blocks in this year's Kids Count report and supported the early education work of the leaders of the Palatine area.

Stand for Children, endorsed by Voices for Illinois Children and almost 1,000 other organizations, will be June 1 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

The YWCA of Canton recently opened "The **Nancy Elson** Nursery" in honor of the active Voices' board member. "This new facility would not have been possible if it wasn't for Nancy and her dedication to children," **Jean Arndt**, executive director of the Canton YWCA, said

Voices' member **Maria Bechily** has been elected board president of Family Focus. Family Focus, a non-profit resource and support agency, serves about 3,700 families at four centers throughout the Chicago metropolitan area.

Kids Count and State Finances Project Director **Ami Nagle** recently addressed the annual Midwest Regional Conference of the United Way in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Nagle outlined for the group the possible federal funding changes coming down from Washington, D.C., and what they might mean to states and local communities.

Ed Williams

In March, Voices' board member **Michael Freeborn** opened up his law firm's training room to Voices' newly organized Success Starts Young Leadership Team. The group, which underwent six hours of thorough public speaking training, will address Local School Councils, Parent Teacher Organizations and other groups on the importance of early childhood education.

To share your news and child advocacy efforts, drop us a note at Voices for Illinois Children, 208 S. LaSalle St. Suite 1580, Chicago, IL 60604. The phone is (312) 456-0600. Our fax is (312) 456-0088. ■

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Be a voice for Illinois children

An award winning author recently marveled at a sad irony in our country. While more people today are talking about children and their needs, less is actually being done.

With welfare reform, human services restructuring and other heated issues buzzing around Washington, D.C. and Springfield, it is imperative that Illinois' 3.3 million kids get more of the attention they deserve.

You can help. For less than the cost of a night at the movies, you can become a member of Voices for Illinois Children. For $25, you will receive our special "action alert" mailings and reduced prices on all our advocacy materials. You'll also be adding another outspoken voice to our statewide network of child advocates.

If you're already a member or plan to be, volunteer your time, talents or services to Voices.

None of our work would be possible without the help of hundreds of volunteers. Everyday people from all walks of life and from every corner of the state organize community forums, conduct candidate surveys, assist with mailings and speak out on behalf of children.

Join Voices for Illinois Children -- and join hundreds of other advocates across the state who are pressing forward to make life better for kids.

To become a Voices' member and to volunteer, simply fill out the enclosed envelope and drop it in the mail to: Voices For Illinois Children, 208 S. LaSalle St., Suite 1580, Chicago, IL 60604 or phone (312) 456-0600. Thank you. ■

Advocacy Anecdotes

"If you are a young woman, 18, without a high school education and without a husband, and you have a baby, the chances are 80 percent that child will grow up in poverty. If you are 18, with a high school education, a job and get married and you have a baby, the chances are eight percent. It's that simple. That's the problem we have to talk about in this country. That's the focus of government, and business and the media. That is our future. For all those reasons, I hope we ... get our economic house in order, and begin to focus on something much more central to all our lives and that's the future of our kids and our country."

— Tim Russert, NBC senior vice president and host of Meet the Press during a recent Economics Club of Chicago forum moderated by Voices' Board member Willard Bunn

"We must always remember that there are few successful adults who were not first successful children."

— Author unknown

"All of us, editors, corporate executives and, yes, even RV repairmen can do something to help out our children. Spend time with a kid, volunteer or just register to vote are simple things we all can do, no matter if we live in Lincoln Park, Naperville or Elwood."

— Jeff Pilon, a Joliét resident and recreational vehicle mechanic in a January letter to the editor of the Chicago Tribune ■

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Advocacy Resources

To best advocate for kids, we all need credible and timely information. Voices produces materials covering a wide variety of issues facing today's children. To order, contact Voices at (312) 456-0600.

Human Services Reform in Illinois: Opportunities, Challenges and a Vision for the 21st Century

This white paper responds to the Governor's proposal to reorganize human services. It also challenges policy makers to stress prevention and community involvement in any reform. *Complimentary.*

1995 Illinois Kids Count: Building the Future

Along with a county-by-county breakdown of child well being in Illinois, Kids Count outlines eight strategies that are working to improve the lives of children. The book also recaps an insightful conversation among six child advocacy experts. *$12 for members. $15 for non-members. A complimentary summary book is available.*

Dollars and Sense: A Guide to Spending on Children and Families in Illinois

Illinois spends more money reacting to problems than preventing them. This easy-to-understand view of the state financing system breaks down the numbers to offer a peek at how we invest in children. *$12 for members. $15 for non-members. $3 for appendix of data tables.*

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- Your Kids Count Conference Invite
- Speaking Up for Early Education
- A Future Leader Profile
- Advocacy Updates, Network News

...and much more!

"Agencies need to stop being buildings and start being people again," East St.Louis' Johnnie Penelton said at the Campaign for Illinois Communities Symposium

Symposium Strengthens Community–State Partnerships

Lisa Simpson plans to write a book about her experiences on public aid.

"I went from having it all -- married, a house and a beautiful son -- to having nothing," the 27-year-old from Vienna, Illinois said. "I hit rock bottom. I was divorced and in a relationship I realize now was abusive."

Less than two years later, Simpson is on her way back. She will graduate with a bachelors degree in May and is already looking for full-time work.

"I'm gonna make it," the single mother said. "But I was lucky. Others might never make it this far."

Helping others make it off welfare is why Simpson attended Voice's recently co-sponsored Campaign for Illinois Communities Symposium at McDonald's Corporate Training Headquarters in Oak Brook.

More than 175 Illinoisans, from business owners, police officers and teachers to government officials and head start moms attended the statewide symposium. They shared frustrations, talked realities and discussed ways to improve the delivery of human services in Illinois.

"No doubt about it, this is hard, not to mention, tiring work," B.J. Walker, assistant to Governor Edgar on human services reform said. "But building on existing partnerships between communities and state government is essential to the reform process."

At the symposium, Walker told participants, "Collectively you represent 14 different communities and we need your help to reform human services here in Illinois. This state has hundreds of local communities across the state and we will need to be the best and mobilize the best."

A public-private partnership between Voices, the Governor's Task Force on Human Services Reform, Kraft Foods and the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, the Campaign was designed to get Illinoisans involved in human services restructuring.

At the symposium, representatives from the 14 participating communities, members of the Governors Task Force on Human Services Reform, other government officials and state legislators came together to talk about human services reform and the critical role communities must play in this process.

"Being on public aid can make the most honest of people dishonest and that isn't right," Simpson said. "The only way to really fix this thing is to get those people living in the system day in and day out talking with those higher ups running the thing."

Simpson, like most symposium participants, attended one of the campaign's 14 local roundtable discussions, which were convened in towns and neighborhoods from Freeport and Quincy to Springfield and Chicago between October 1995 and March 1996.

(Continued on page 12)

Illinoisans Among 200,000 Standing for Children

Michele Augustyn, a special education teacher from Elk Grove Village, never thought she'd march on Washington for anything. In fact, the 26-year-old had visited our nation's capitol only once before on a seventh grade field trip.

"I'm not an activist or anything," the third-year teacher said sitting near the Lincoln Memorial. "But when it comes to kids, I see everyday what budget cuts can do. I am not only here because I worry about my students, I'm here because I worry about my nieces and nephews and their kids and their kids' kids. Children need to be a priority again in this country."

Augustyn was one of more than 200,000 Americans from grandparents and pediatricians to social workers and kindergartners who flooded the park area in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. to stand up for children and their needs.

(Continued on page 3)

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For Kids, There is More to Winning Than Gold

A Column from Voices' President, Jerry Stermer

The Olympic Games have always been a source of great excitement for me. The onset of the Atlanta games were no exception. The competitiveness, the national pride, the diversity of cultures, the will to win -- they all add to the mystique that makes the games a true spectacle.

Yet, sadly, the Olympics, like much of sports today, embrace the "winning is everything" philosophy. Victory is no longer found in simply competing, but rather in gold. Finishing first is the only prize and those left behind matter little, if at all.

In our everyday lives, those left behind matter a great deal, especially when they're children. We believe in the full development of all children and the idea that every child deserves a shot at being a champion.

A recent public opinion survey commissioned by the Chicago Community Trust reveals that people in Illinois are just as concerned about kids.

Illinoisans fear that a large number of children -- up to one in every four -- are falling behind and won't catch up to become successful adults.

The study did reveal some good news. People in Illinois overwhelmingly want to roll up their sleeves and turn things around for kids. People feel that children at risk need support as early in life as possible and that help should be directed not just at kids, but at families as a whole.

These ideas – starting early and supporting families – are the cornerstones of Voices' agenda and are the essence of our recently developed Making Kids Count Campaign.

The campaign jumps into full swing this fall with a hands-on leadership conference to help all who worry about children better speak up for kids. The campaign rolls on in a statewide series of community forums for children. These volunteer-led discussions with candidates will be designed to push children's issues to the top of the agenda for the upcoming elections.

While the Trust survey underscores the discouraging news that our expectations for children have dropped in Illinois, there is hope in knowing Illinoisans care about kids at risk and are willing to invest in improving family supports, education and economic opportunities for children and their parents.

Along with the Trust poll, two other recent news events offer hope that the wave of momentum is turning for children.

Early childhood programs work and they are a better investment than prisons, a Rand Corporation study found.

The true worth of programs like voluntary home visitation and preschool have been questioned for years. This Rand study shows that investing in these programs provides long-term, real savings and reduces potential crime.

A recent Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission report offers an even more compelling argument for investing in children. The commission predicts the creation of a million new jobs in the greater Chicagoland area by the year 2020.

This hope for the future fuels the passions of advocates for children. But we must wonder --- Will our children be ready for the future? Will all of today's children compete for these new jobs? Who will win? Who will be left behind? And, most importantly, how do we train today's kids to be more than just Olympic hopefuls, but champions at a bigger game -- life itself?

Jerry Stermer

"People in Illinois fear that many children are falling behind and won't catch up.

But the good news is Illinoisans overwhelmingly want to roll up their sleeves and turn things around for kids."

Thousands of Americans marched on Washington, D.C. for children.

(Continued from front page)

The rally, titled Stand for Children and convened by the Children's Defense Fund on June 1, was billed as a non-partisan, non-political wake-up call for Americans. Organizers wanted all of us to know it's pretty tough being a kid today -- but that each of us can a make a difference in the lives of young people.

More than 5,000 Illinoisans from Rockford to East St. Louis responded to the call. They drove, flew and boarded buses to participate in the historic day.

While thousands of Illinoisans traveled to the stand, Jeff Bissonnette, the director of operations for the Illinois Hunger Coalition, just tacked an extra day onto an already scheduled D.C. trip to attend the rally. He was awestruck by the Stand.

"It was truly an amazing day," the Springfield resident said. "People from not only all over the country but from every walk of life, from seniors to parents to teenagers, came out to send the message that kids are important."

Bissonnette wasn't only impressed with the D.C. turnout, he was impressed with the thousands of people who attended local Stand for Children rallies in hundreds of U.S. towns and cities.

"Not only is it necessary for us to take our case nationally to Washington," he said. "But we also need to march in every city and town. That's where many issues facing children will be played out and kids need to be a priority not only on the federal and state levels but in every community."

Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund, called Illinoisans and all Americans to the national gathering.

"We must dedicate ourselves today to leave no child -- no matter race, education, hometown or background -- behind," Edelman said in a 30-minute keynote address. "This is a defining time for our nation -- and for our children. The choices we make as parents, community leaders and citizens in this last national election year of the 20th century will shape our nation's and our children's fate."

Voices President Jerry Stermer agreed.

"We must work to spread the message to every Illinois town that we must take a Stand For Children," he said. "We must organize and we must be committed to making every day a day dedicated to kids."

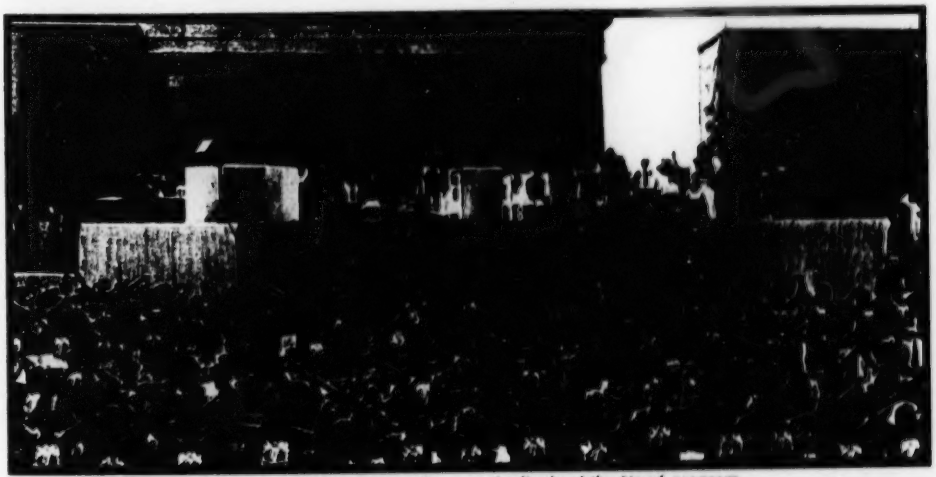
Nationwide, more than 4,000 corporations, organizations, churches and unions endorsed the Stand.

John Kesse, a 13-year-old Chicagoan and Stand attendee, called the event a challenge not only for adults to take more of an active role in the future of today's kids, but for young people, too.

"This isn't just about today," Kesse said. "This march is about putting kids first each and every day and that's something we can all work on."

"I'm here because I worry about my nieces and nephews and their kids and their kids' kids.

Children need to be a priority again in this country."



Marian Wright Edelman presides over the finale of the Stand program.

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Make Kids Count by...

...Strengthening Your Voice for Children

oices is convening a leadership conference to inform, energize and mobilize a network of volunteer child advocates across the state.

Scheduled for Sept. 23 at the University of Chicago's new downtown center, the conference, "Making Kids Count, Building A Better Future," will cover a wide variety of children's issues and include skill building sessions to train advocates in areas from public speaking and media relations to collaboration and working with legislators.

"We've wanted to host a hands-on workshop for some time to help folks all over the state better speak up for kids," Lynne Mitchell, Voices advocacy coordinator, said. "The 23th will be a great opportunity to share information, sharpen our skills and help all of us do a better job for kids in our own hometowns and neighborhoods."

The day long conference is partially supported by AT&T and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL LYNNE MITCHELL AT VOICES, (312) 456-0600.

...Or Hosting a Community Forum

oices has designed and will sponsor community forums to help Illinoisans talk with their neighbors about what we can all do to make kids count in Illinois.

These Making Kids Count Community Forums will be informal gatherings in private homes and public halls across Illinois. They will involve a wide variety of people -- including candidates for the State Senate and the Illinois House of Representatives -- in conversations about solutions to various problems confronting children, families and communities.

"This is a great opportunity for all of us to get out and help kids," Lynne Mitchell, Voices advocacy coordinator said. "We feel one of the best ways to help children is to register to vote and vote wisely. These forums go a long way in helping voters and candidates better understand the issues."

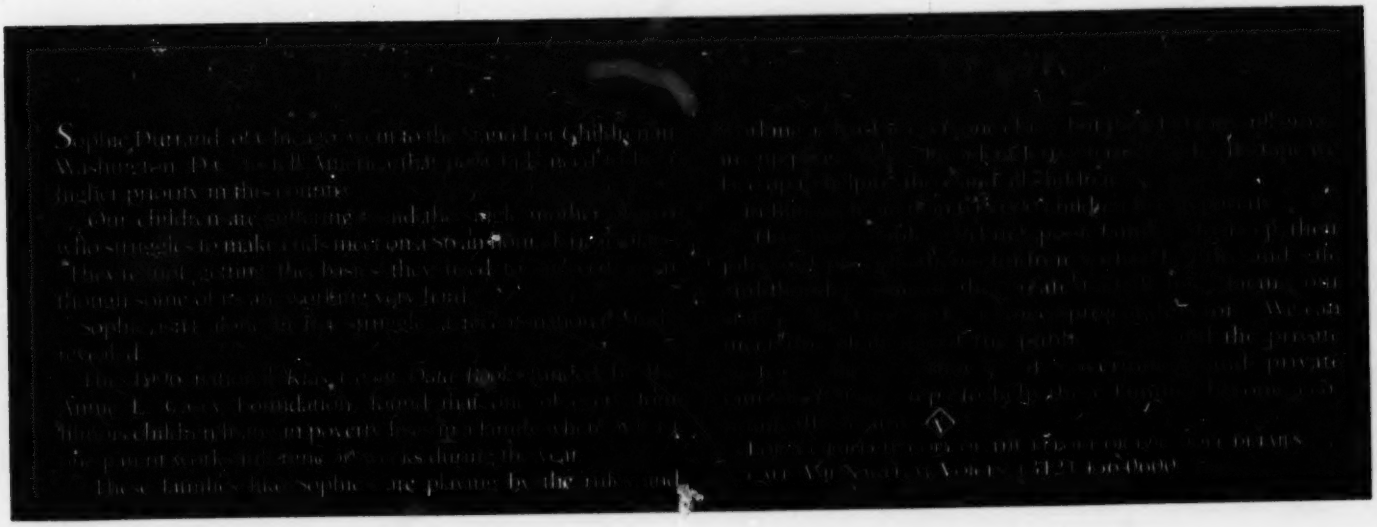
Mitchell emphasized that the forums are designed to be easy to host and highly informative.

"We know people are busy so we've made these gatherings incredibly simple to run," she explained. "Voices has printed everything from invitations and thank you letters to talking points and an easy to follow host checklist."

The forums will play a vital role in shaping the agenda for the upcoming elections and the future of our state, Jerry Stermer, Voices president said.

"This November will be key to how children will fare in Illinois for the next few years," he said. "Hosting a forum is an easy way to inform and inspire your friends and neighbors about issues facing kids and a great opportunity to get to know your soon-to-be-elected officials."

TO VOLUNTEER TO HOST A FORUM IN YOUR COMMUNITY, PLEASE CALL LYNNE MITCHELL AT VOICES, (312) 456-0600.



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Speaking Up for Early Education

ary Kaleta began teaching three-and-four-year-olds almost 25 years ago.

"I started out my career teaching high school and quickly realized it wasn't for me. I took a preschool teaching job in the Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago and the little ones just amazed me," Kaleta reminisced. "There is just so much going on in their little heads. You can see them learning right before your eyes."

Mary Kaleta reads a book to two of her students at Truman College's Child Development Center on Chicago's north side.

Now an administrator at Truman College's Child Development Center on Chicago's north side, Kaleta is convinced all kids, rich and poor, need early education to be even remotely ready to start school.

"What used to be taught in second grade is now taught in first, what was in first is now covered in kindergarten," she said. "If even a bright child shows up for the first day of kindergarten without early education, he's behind."

Kaleta is so passionate, she's taking her message and treasure chest of early education success stories on the road. Mary recently volunteered for Voices' new Success Starts Young speakers bureau.

"I'm going to talk to chambers of commerce, local school councils, churches -- pretty much anyone who'll listen," Kaleta said. "This is an important issue. Kids need quality early education and they need programs flexible enough to fit into their parents' busy schedules."

With support from the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, the new speakers bureau will take the issue of early education and child care to residents across the state. The speaking engagements will kick off this month with presentations in Chicago.

"With Chicago's public schools expanding preschool programs to 10,000 more children, it's the natural place to start," Voices Projects Director Carol Dellahousaye said. "But this isn't only a Chicago program. In the fall, the leadership team will extend throughout the state. We need to get the word out to all Illinoisans."

Legislative efforts

During the spring session of the Illinois General Assembly, an education funding compromise added more than $10 million to the state prekindergarten program. The state public aid budget for child care also received a $40 million boost, thanks to projected savings in expenditures of Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

Two legislative proposals supported by Voices, the Day Care Action Council and others in the statewide coalition that assisted the Governor's Work Group on Early Childhood, were not called for a vote during the pre-election year session.

The measures -- known as SUCCEED [Steps to Unite Child Care and Early Education Demonstration] and Thriving Children, Striving Families -- were aimed at improving the quality and increasing the availability of early education and child care programs.

"This battle is far from over," Voices President Jerry Stermer said. "Illinois parents deserve an all-day, year-round combination of quality early education and child care. There's no better way to ensure a child's future success in school or help parents find or keep jobs."

Our new Success Starts Young speakers bureau needs you and your next meeting. We're looking for a few outspoken advocates and quite-a-few podiums to spread the word about early education and child care. To volunteer your time and/or next meeting, call Mike Roach at Voices, (312) 456-0600.

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Survey Reveals Illinoisans Care About Kids at Risk

A recent statewide opinion poll found widespread concern across Illinois about the future of today's children.

More than four out of ten Illinoisans surveyed believe a substantial number -- almost a quarter -- of children in their community are "at risk" of failing to become successful adults.

More than 77 percent of those polled rank assisting these "at risk" youngsters among the top issues Illinois needs to address. Helping at risk kids rates closely behind improving education, fighting crime and battling violence among those surveyed. Helping children at risk outranked often higher publicized concerns like controlling taxes and reducing poverty and addressing unemployment.

"This is the most in-depth poll ever conducted to measure public attitude in our state toward helping children at risk," Voices President Jerry Stermer said. "These results clearly show kids rank as a top priority and Illinoisans are willing to chip in to improve our future."

The Chicago Community Trust commissioned the statewide survey, which polled 854 Illinoisans randomly by phone. To ensure an unbiased, bipartisan study, two independent public opinion research firms -- one democratic and one republican -- undertook the research jointly.

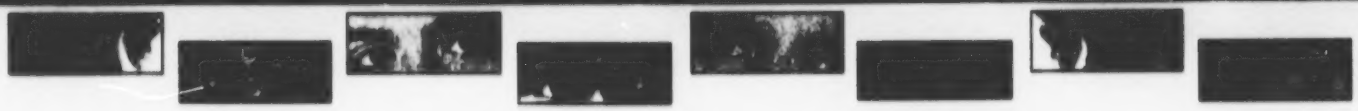
The poll defined children at risk as "young people who face poverty, child abuse, malnutrition or other serious problems and therefore may not be able to grow up healthy and be successful adult members of society."

The poll also found that more than one out of two Illinoisans think that only half of the children in their community will get the education they need. Almost 70 percent of survey respondents believe efforts to help children at risk should focus on families, not just kids.

TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE POLL RESULTS, CALL ANDREA STRICKLAND AT VOICES, (312) 456-0600.

This ad appeared in papers across the state. The Children At Risk poll grew out of a series of activities spearheaded by the Chicago Community Trust focusing on the state of children in Illinois. The ongoing project is advised by a group of child advocates and practitioners including Voices.

Our **Children** are **Watching**



children at risk

young people who face serious problems, and therefore may not grow up to be healthy and successful adult members of society.

Two days ago in Washington, D.C., hundreds of thousands of people from around the country took part in the first national Stand for Children Day. Illinois was well represented at this historic event by parents and children, teachers and clergy, and many others from all walks of life and from all over the state. And a new statewide survey shows that Illinoisans think now is the time to stand up for our children.

41% of Illinoisans say **more than one-quarter of the children in their own community are at risk.** Statewide, 23% of adults say one of every two children in their own community is at risk. **People are very concerned about the future of children in their communities,** whether it's in urban areas, the suburbs, or in small towns and rural areas around the state.

77% of Illinoisans believe **helping children at risk should be a high priority.** Adults say helping children at risk is more important than controlling taxes and government spending, reducing poverty and unemployment, and fighting drug abuse. People think that helping children at risk will help solve some of these other problems in society.

41% of adults in Illinois say **just getting through high school** is their biggest hope for their children. Far down on the list are to live out dreams...to be a good citizen...to be independent...and to be healthy.

31% of Illinoisans think **fewer than half of the children in their communities will reach adulthood without being a victim of violence.**

57% of Illinoisans say **only half of the children in their communities will get the education they need.** At the same time, people across the state rank education as the number one priority.

65% of Illinoisans **reject outright the idea that the problems of children at risk are too big to solve.** Ninety-two percent say the best hope is to help early in a child's life, to prevent problems that are tough to deal with later on. And, 69% of Illinoisans say efforts to help should focus on families, not just kids.

Our Children are WATCHING. → What should we do?

- **Stand for Children.** Tell your legislators and community leaders that things must change for our children.
- **Stand for Children.** Share your concerns about children at risk with your neighbors.
- **Stand for Children.** Share your time, talents and resources with a child. Make a difference for children in your community.

Illinois has spoken. Our children are watching.

This advertisement was paid for by The Chicago Community Trust, The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, The Polk Bros. Foundation, and The United Way Crusade of Mercy.

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A Grandmother's Voice Can Change the World

By Nancy Stevenson

Editor's note: ***In the course of her work, Voices Managing Director Nancy Stevenson meets countless people concerned about the future of our children. This is the first in a series of interviews conducted by Nancy about young people and their struggles to succeed.***

Charlene Vincent works five days a week at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center. "In my neighborhood, I see death everyday, but I won't let fear keep me from my future. I want to be a doctor and save lives."

Charlene Vincent will never forget her first day of little league.

"I was so scared," the 17-year-old from Chicago's west side remembered. "But none of my family could go to my game. I asked my mom, my dad, even my older sister. All were busy. I begged my grandmother to go, but she had just come home from the hospital and was so weary she could hardly move."

With no one to cheer her on, Charlene, mitt in tow, ventured out alone.

"I was so brave," she recalled. "That is, till it was my turn to bat."

Fears filled her little eyes and just when she was about to give up, she heard a bellowing voice from across the play lot.

"Go on, baby. Hit that ball," her grandmother shouted from her first floor window. "You can do it. I know you can."

Charlene promptly drove the next pitch into the outfield for a single.

"It wasn't a home run or anything, but it sure was a hit," Charlene admitted, a touch embarrassed. "What still amazes me to this day isn't the swing or the hit, but how my grandmother found the energy to hoist herself to the window and shout across the lot."

"She was an amazing woman. She meant the world to me and she'd do anything for me," Charlene remembered. "Although she died more than six years ago, I know she's still watching over me."

In Charlene's neighborhood, she admits, you need all the watching over you can get.

"Every day, the gangs are shooting kids up and people my age are doing the killing and the dying," she explained. "My family and I just went to a funeral yesterday for someone my age."

Although she admits her neighborhood is a tough place to grow up, Charlene knows her grandmother would not have accepted any excuses.

"'Go on baby, you can do it. I know you can.' I can hear her today just as clearly as during that little league game," she said.

That inner drive to never give up -- inherited from her grandmother -- has paid great dividends for Charlene. She's a straight A student at Collins High School. "Well, not exactly straight A's. I have gotten a B or two in Spanish," she admitted.

She is a National Honor Society member, president of junior achievement and past-president of student council.

In her spare time, Charlene also works about 20 hours a week in graphic reproduction at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center.

"I want to be a doctor and save lives one day," she explains. "It'd be a cool thing to be."

Charlene first fell in love with the medical profession as a little girl listening to her grandmother tell stories about bandaging arms and delivering babies.

"My grandmother was a nurse and my real motivator," Charlene remembered. "Nothing came easy for her."

"After she moved to Chicago with her husband and children, my grandfather left her with five little girls to raise," Charlene said. "But she didn't give up. She got her GED and then became an RN. She never stopped fighting."

Charlene recalls that conviction when giving up seems like the easiest solution.

"There's a piece of my grandmother in me and in everyone in my family," she said. "I can feel her sense of fight, especially when things aren't going my way."

During her grandmother's last few painful years fighting complications stemming from diabetes, the two visited often.

"We talked about everything, about boys, about school, about life itself. My grandmother always told me that you can be whatever you want to be."

That important message has come in handy in Charlene's tough surroundings.

"My freshman year in high school, something like 40 percent of the girls got pregnant," she said. "I knew that was a dead end and that's when I really got involved in extra curriculars."

Along with student council and junior achievement, Charlene joined Future Leaders.

This Chicago-area program, funded by the Chicago Community Trust, is designed to bring out the best in young people throughout the city and suburbs.

The program has been a big boost for Charlene. In fact, it was the first time she'd been around people with different backgrounds.

"Before Future Leaders, I believed in stereotypes. I believed white people were all the same," she said bluntly. "If [a white person] like you had interviewed me before, I would've hated you. Now I know we are a lot more alike and I can accept our differences -- which will be important in medical school."

When challenged with how tough college and medical school might be, Charlene was quick to respond.

"Don't worry about me. I'm gonna make it," she said confidently. "Just like that day on the play lot. I know my grandmother is watching over me."

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A GRANDMOTHER OR EVEN A RELATIVE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN A CHILD'S LIFE. FOR VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES, CALL LYNNE MITCHELL AT VOICES, (312) 456-0600.

Voices Benefit Raises Record $197,000

The 1996 Kids Count Awards Dinner, Voices' annual benefit event, raised more than $197,000. The evening ranks as the best money-making benefit in Voices' nine-year history.

Michael E. Murphy, vice chairman and chief administrative officer of Sara Lee Corporation, chaired the June 12 event which drew more than 340 guests to the Renaissance Hotel ballroom in downtown Chicago.

"Michael Murphy, with the help of all of Sara Lee's staff, did a tremendous job in chairing the dinner," Voices Managing Director Nancy Stevenson said. "Their hard work made the evening extremely enjoyable, not to mention, successful."

The 1996 awards ceremony recognized two education innovators, a local philanthropist and an entire community for their dedication to building better futures for children.

Debby Jannotta and Joyce Rumsfeld were honored for creating the Chicago Foundation for Education, which focuses on inspiring Chicago public elementary school students and supporting their teachers.

Voices also recognized Harrison Steans, founder of Chicago's I Have A Dream Foundation, which challenges young people to invest in their futures.

The final Kids Count award of the evening went to the residents of Freeport for their community's many collaborative efforts, which have included the building of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for early education.

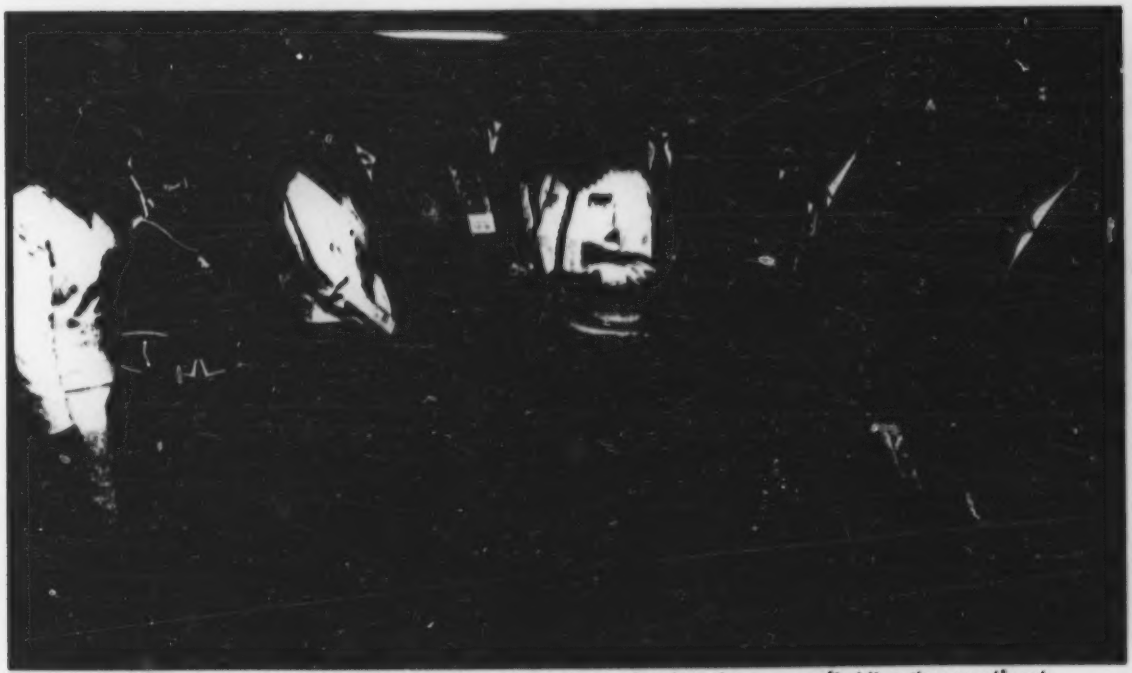
"These award winners are living, breathing examples of what individuals, organizations and even whole communities can do to improve the lives of children," said Kathy Halloran, Chair of the Voices Board of Directors. "They all embody what Voices for Illinois Children is all about."

The evening's centerpieces even carried a children's theme. Colorful building blocks and balloons, donated by 18 independently owned Chicagoland toy shops, dotted every table. After the event, the centerpieces were donated to the King Center in Freeport.

A silent auction, with more than 30 items on the block, offered dinner guests the opportunity to bid on everything from Chicago Bulls tickets and a mountain bike to a private showing at the Chicago Art Institute and a week-long stay for two at a dude ranch in the Colorado Rockies.

"The silent auction, the awards ceremony, the dinner -- they were all major successes," said Miriam Kelm, benefit planning committee chair. "We couldn't be happier with the way the evening unfolded."

Long-time Chicago journalist Harry Porterfield emceed the dinner and awards ceremony. Chicago jazz greats Oscar Brown Jr. and Family provided musical entertainment.



Award presenter Sally Jackson, the president of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce [holding the award] and Jerry Stermer, President of Voices [to her immediate right] present a Kids Count Award to residents of Freeport.

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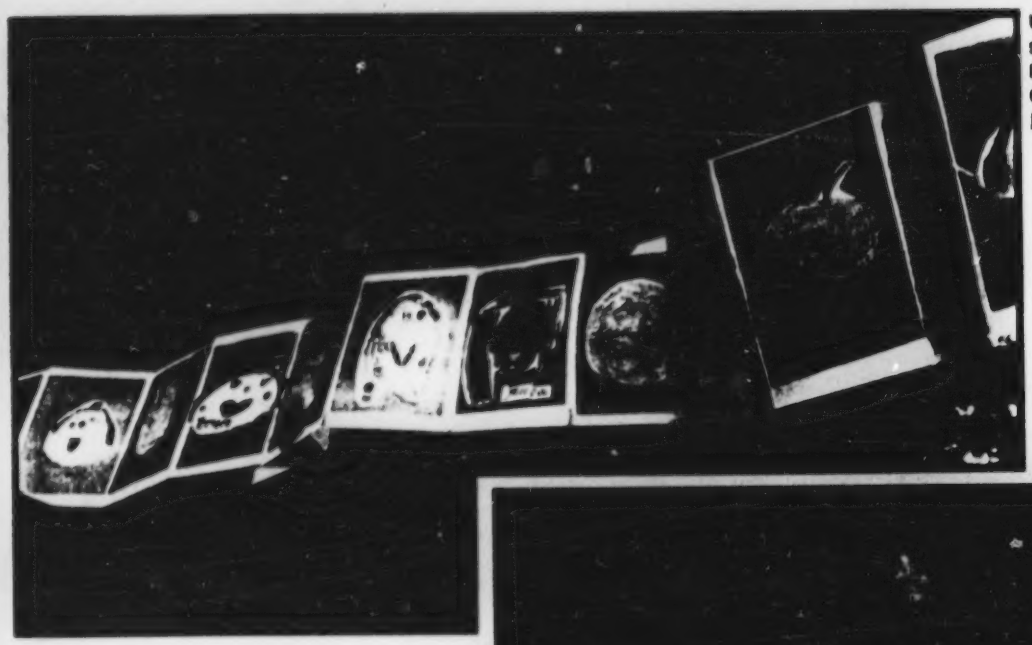
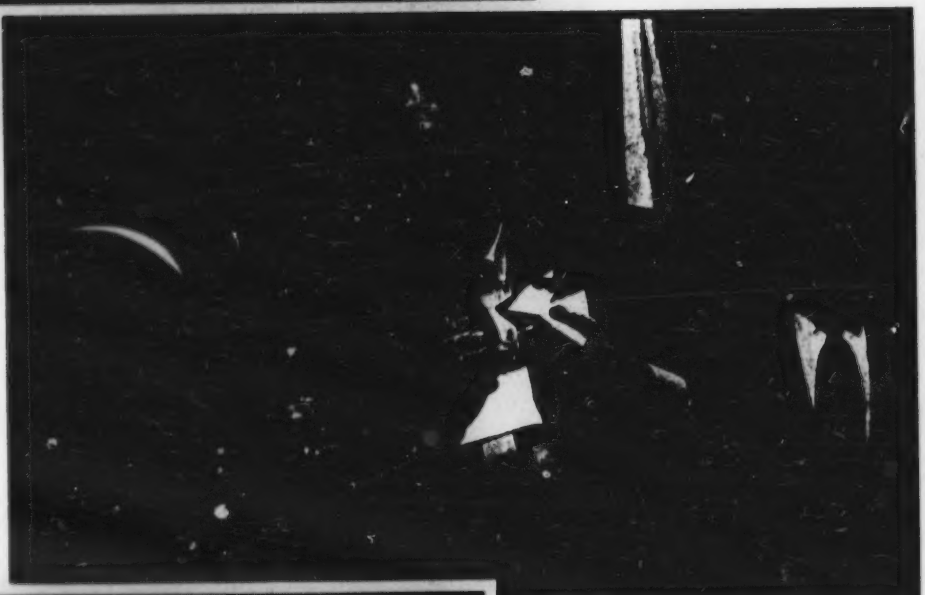


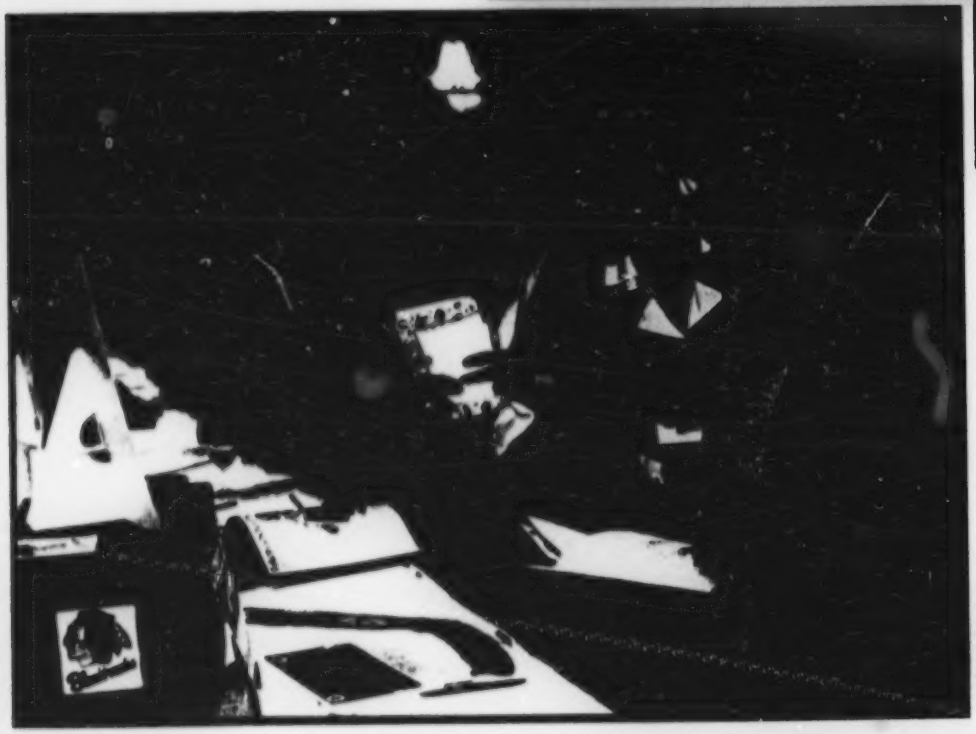
Using pictures drawn by her students, kindergarten teacher Lenora Akhibi introduces Kids Count Award Winners Debby Jannotta & Joyce Rumsfeld.

"The silent auction, the awards ceremony, the dinner – they were all major successes...

We couldn't be happier with the way the evening unfolded."



Award Winner Harrison Steans (middle) jokes while reading the inscription to outspoken friend and award presenter Anthony Brooks (left). Dinner Emcee Harry Porterfield looks on.



Dinner guests bid at the silent auction. An entire skybox for a night at a Blackhawks game, martial arts lessons and a get away weekend to Galena were a few of the many items up for bid.

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Your Voice

EvAngel Mama Dee, an outspoken child advocate, penned this poem on her 15 hour bus trip from Chicago to the Stand for Children in Washington, D.C. Mama Dee is an International Black Writer Award Winner and a member of the Attorney General's Violence Against Children Task Force.

"We must stand for children until the rest of the world stands with us," writer, advocate and religious leader EvAngel Mama Dee concluded in this poem she wrote en route to the Stand for Children March in Washington, D.C.

Illinois Voices Stand For Children

By EvAngel Mama Dee

To stand up for the physical, mental
and spiritual rights of children is an act of love and work of necessity

When you stand for children you stand for
The past that was your parents
The present that is yours
The future that is theirs

When you stand for children you stand
for the best that any civilization can have
Children who are

Educationally excellent
Environmentally safe
Physically healthy
Emotionally sound
Morally responsible
Technologically prepared
Economically successful
Socially conscious
And spiritually committed to the
inalienable rights of life, liberty
and the pursuit of holiness

Isn't the best way for the U.S. the American family?

To form a more perfect union, have a "just" government

Ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense

Promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity

That's why we stand for children and will continue standing until our voices for children are heard in Washington and throughout America

We must stand for children until the rest of the world stands with us!

TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH 22,000 OTHER CHILD ADVOCATES, SEND YOUR TYPEWRITTEN COMMENTS TO :
YOUR VOICE,
VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN,
208 S. LASALLE ST., SUITE 1580,
CHICAGO, IL 60604.
OR FAX (312) 456-0088.

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LINDA MARTIN
Evanston, Illinois

Dear Friend of Children,

I'd like to urge you to become a member of Voices for Illinois Children – but, first, I hope you won't mind if I share a bit of personal news.

We're expecting a new baby in the Martin family. My son, David, and his wife, Eva, are expecting their first child in January.

Our whole family is working hard to guarantee this baby will have the best of all possible worlds. But these days, no one family can do it alone. No matter how much you prepare, love and care, you still need organizations like Voices standing beside you.

I became a Voices member in 1994 because I wanted to find another way to tackle the complicated problems facing all children.

You probably know that Voices is working to change attitudes and policies that affect children, families and the communities we live in. You might not know that in just the past few months, we've:

- fought to increase the number of quality early education and child care programs – which are among a young person's surest path to success in school and a critical part of helping parents find and keep jobs
- publicized solutions to many problems facing children and families in our Illinois Kids Count report
- involved hundreds of Illinoisans in efforts to help our communities have a bigger say in how human services are designed and delivered
- helped policy makers and other citizens gain a better understanding of how Illinois funds public education and what block grants might mean in our state
- mobilized participation in Stand For Children, the national rally for young people.

None of this work would have been possible without the contributions of Voices' members. Voices can't provide the love that every child needs, but we can make a difference in every child's life. We can change attitudes and policies and we can help more young people grow up well-educated, safe, well-nurtured and healthy.

I'm proud to be a Voices Member and I hope you too will be one soon.

Sincerely,

Linda Martin

P.S. To become a "Voice" for Illinois children, just use the envelope in the center of this newsletter. Membership starts at $25. You'll receive Action Alert mailings and valuable discounts on all of our advocacy materials and a special members only discount for our "Making Kids Count, Building a Better Future" Leadership Conference. If you have any questions, call Voices at (312) 456-0600.

(Continued from front page)

"At the roundtable, people were talking and talking and it was all just going right over my head," Simpson explained. "Finally, I said, hold up. I don't understand and I know the other parents here don't either."

It was a breakthrough moment for everyone in the room.

"Maybe they're used to their regular meeting or maybe that's just how they talk, but the key was it didn't make much sense to those of us on aid in the room. If all this reform stuff is gonna work, we've all got to speak the same language," she said.

"Along with breaking down communication barriers, the roundtables were exercises in envisioning goals for human services delivery in each community," Gaylord Gieseke, Voices senior projects director, explained. "And the symposium was about rolling up our sleeves and beginning the difficult work of making those goals into realities."

During the course of the two-day symposium, participants outlined what works and does not work in their communities, brainstormed areas of human services where communities desire greater responsibility and accountability, talked about the skills and resources needed to assume these responsibilities and began the hard work of identifying elements of a state/community partnership.

"Each community was also challenged to outline their next steps," said Susan Frankel Perlin, Voices project coordinator. "In Albany Park, participants discussed setting up free medical and dental clinics to improve local access to health care; in East St. Louis, participants emphasized respect and user-friendly services; and in DuPage County they talked about creating a coordinated case management system by improving communication, linking human services providers to one another through technology and supporting community-based resource centers."

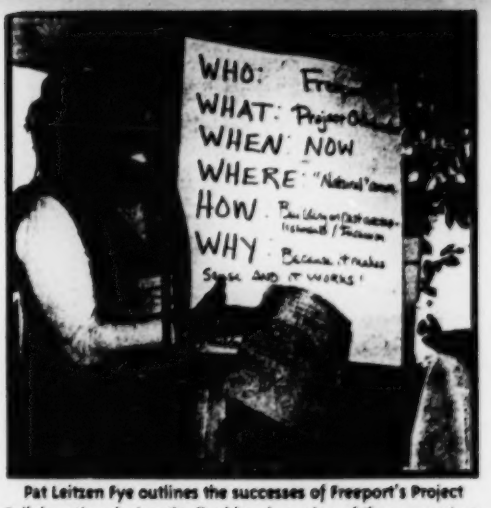
Tom Sullivan, the executive director of the Waukegan Community Federation, said the symposium offered leaders a unique perspective into their community.

"The symposium gave leaders a chance to take a good hard objective look at their particular community without normal daily deadlines and pressures hanging over their heads," Sullivan said. "Our day-to-day meetings are so focused on the work at hand that we seldom get a chance to focus on the bigger details."

Sullivan said his 13 or so fellow Waukegan representatives left the symposium with a better sense of their community and its needs.

"We all know that Waukegan is an extremely ethnic and economically diverse community, but I think all of us at the symposium realized we need to do a better job understanding the many diverse groups and populations we represent. This is so important, we're focusing an upcoming retreat on cultural sensitivity."

While local outcomes and strategies differed from community to community, all seemed to agree that better communication and a customer-friendly service approach are critical elements of success in reforming human services in Illinois.



Pat Leitzen Fye outlines the successes of Freeport's Project Collaboration during the final lunch session of the symposium.

"This is why getting the Lisa Simpsons of the world to sit down with the Joan Walters [director of the Bureau of the Budget] and David Roberts [director of the Department on Aging] of the world was so important," Jerry Stermer, Voices president, said. "Real progress can't be made unless you get the policy makers and the consumers of human services to sit down together to talk about these issues."

Sullivan was simply impressed that the director of the Department of Alcohol and Substance Abuse sat with his community during lunch.

"It was a beautiful Saturday and DASA Director Barb Cimaglio could have been hundreds of other places," he said. "But she wasn't. She was sitting with us and really engaged with what we had to say."

"That level of partnering or two way communications or whatever you want to call it is what 'grassroots is really all about," Sullivan continued. "We all know that a Springfield down system won't work. That's why the symposium was so encouraging. When those making policy are eating lunch with those living out policy -- good things have got to result."

While participants were inspired by their wealth of progress, Gieseke emphasized that building working partnerships between state government and communities is a long process.

"The roundtables and symposium are just a few of the first steps in a grueling process of improving the delivery of human services in Illinois," she said. "But though the first steps are always extremely difficult, they have begun to move us together down the same road."

No matter the progress, Ralph Smith, the director of planning and development at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, was impressed with Illinois' "audaciousness" for real human services reform.

"There is something happening here. Something that is very different -- something you should be very proud of," the symposium dinner keynote speaker said.

While congratulatory, the outspoken child advocate also voiced frustration and reason for Illinoisans to push onward.

"How can we know as much as we know in this country; spend as much as we spend and care as much as we care and still accomplish so little for kids?" Smith asked. "We must create a society where families can raise their kids, where they can dream and where they can imagine. This is really difficult work, but it is the most important and essential thing we can do for the next generation."

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE SYMPOSIUM FOLLOW UP NEWSLETTER *COMMUNITY VOICES*, CALL SUSAN FRANKEL PERLIN AT VOICES, (312) 456-0600.

COMMON THEMES

The following concepts emerged as central themes among communities during the symposium:

- **Customer service/customer satisfaction**
- **Flexible, non-categorical funding**
- **Incentives for collaboration and coordination at the local level**
- **Local decision-making with support from state government**
- **Complete partnerships -- including business, education and legislators**
- **Building on community strengths and pre-existing resources**
- **Inclusion of human services consumers in the reform process**
- **Better communication and information sharing between the state and communities**
- **Commitment for the long haul**
- **Increase local accountability and responsibility for outcomes**
- **Increase employment opportunities that pay a livable wage and provide benefits**

Advocacy Update:

96 Session:
A Busy Time for
Child Advocates

Voices followed dozens of state legislative initiatives, committees and hearings during the past session.

"This was an important year," said Gaylord Gieseke, Voices senior projects director. "It laid the foundation for the restructuring of Human Services in Illinois and brought to the forefront the debate on how we fund education in Illinois. These are two of the most critical areas that will influence children."

Here are the key legislative issues from this session and how they will impact children.

Education

Education reform ranked among the hottest topics in Springfield this session.

In March, the Ikenberry Commission, appointed by Governor Edgar to develop long-term education solutions, recommended eight principles including a constitutional amendment to ensure adequate school funding.

The long-awaited Ikenberry findings were not granted much consideration. In fact, the *Chicago Tribune* immediately after the reports release labeled the proposal a "tax bombshell." The legislature moved quickly to ensure that the recommended constitutional amendment was not adopted.

House Republicans did, however, forward a plan which proposed allocating new funds to schools through measures such as a flat per-pupil increase, block granting existing categorical programs and instituting mandatory summer school for kids that fall behind.

As proposed, the plan would have jeopardized funding increases in pre-kindergarten and early intervention programs, promised in the Governor's budget address.

Voices, together with the League of Women Voters of Illinois and the Chicago Urban League, published *A Half Empty Plan: A Critique of the House's School Funding Legislation.*

The co-authored report spelled out the limitations of the house plan. It also called for the legislature to develop a long-term school financing plan that provides adequate and equitable funding and offers Illinoisans desperately needed property tax relief.

The final education reform package passed with a $10 million plus increase in pre-kindergarten and a $3 million increase in early intervention. The State Board of Education will hold statewide hearings to develop a plan for the block granting of programs like bi-lingual education, transportation, special education and pre-kindergarten.

Human Services Reorganization

Early in the session, Governor Edgar issued an Executive Order reorganizing the state's Human Services Agencies. The initial plan would have consolidated seven cabinet-level agencies into a single Department of Human Services.

In addition to participating in numerous reorganization focus groups, committee hearings and legislative discussions, Voices published *Human Services Reform in Illinois: Opportunities, Challenges and a Vision for the 21st Century.*

The policy paper established eight guiding principals for successful reorganization and called for the establishment of a specific division of Children, Youth and Families.

The paper also emphasized the importance of community-based decision making and the need to focus on prevention.

The Governor's original Executive Order was defeated, but a legislative compromise called for the consolidation of portions of six state agencies by July 1997. A task force was formed to make recommendations. Hearings will be held shortly across the state to discuss the many complex nuances of reorganization.

Early Discharge of Mothers and Newborns

The legislature approved a plan that will end the much publicized practice of "drive-by" deliveries. Health insurers must now cover hospital stays for mothers and newborns 48 hours after normal births and 96 hours after Cesarean deliveries.

A shorter stay may still be approved if both doctor and patient agree and follow-up home care is provided. Earlier versions of this bill excluded an in-home nurse visit as an option for this vital "follow-up care" provision. Voices worked diligently to assure this important stipulation made the final cut.

(Continued on page 15)

Advocacy Update: The Top Issues

Voices followed countless children-related issues this state legislative session. Here are 10-second summaries for seven key issues.

EDUCATION	Final plan includes $ increases for pre-K and early intervention. State still lacks long term funding solution.
HUMAN SERVICE REORGANIZATION	**Set in motion consolidation of portions of 6 state agencies. Task force will iron out specifics. Success or failure lies in final details.**
DRIVE BY BIRTHS	Insurers must now cover hospital stays for moms and newborns 2 days after birth; 4 days after Cesarean.
CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT	**New initiatives establish paternity administratively instead of thru costly court cases and works to id parents dodging child support. Both successful and saved $ in other states.**
EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION	Two innovative plans would've improved early education facilities, services and addressed child care issues of quality, access and capacity. Neither reached a vote.
CHILD HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM	**Idea would've required state-regulated insurers to cover kid's immunizations and vital preventative care. Plan failed.**
HIV PREGNANCY SCREENING	Failed proposal would've required doctors to offer pregnant women HIV info, which could help save lives.

Network News:
Illinoisans Advocating for Kids

Child advocates from across the state are vigorously working to improve the lives of children. Here are a few of the areas where Voices' members and volunteers are making a difference for kids:

Voices member **Vera Durbin**, the director/owner of the Treehouse Child Care and Education Center in Vandalia, recently completed a busy month. Along with attending Stand for Children in Washington, D.C., Vera culminated two years of hard work by graduating from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville with a Masters Degree in early childhood education.

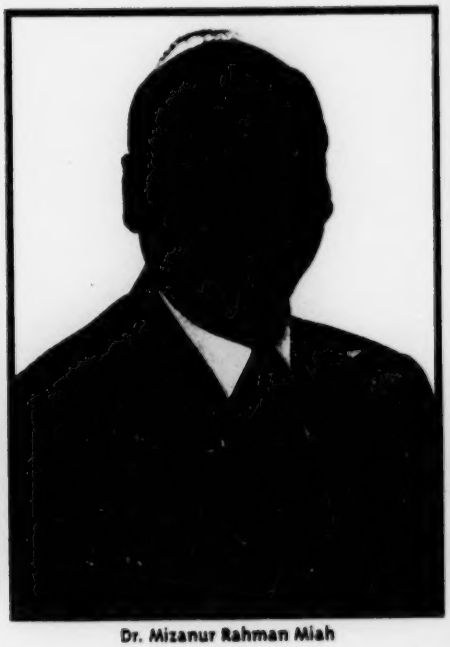
Voices volunteers **Kathy Shuster** and **Shelia Qualizza**, from Mayer, Brown and Platt Attorneys at Law in Chicago, recently assisted the Voices staff with two major mailing projects. Kathy and Shelia are always eager to help and are much appreciated.

The Children's Home & Aid Society of Illinois awarded Voices board member **Bernice Weissbourd** the prestigious "For the Love of Children" award at the organization's 1996 annual meeting. Bernice founded Family Focus, a not-for-profit agency that assists children by supporting families.

The Moscow State Academy of Technology and Human Services in Russia recently awarded Voices member **Dr. Mizanur Rahman Miah** an Honorary Professorship. Dr Miah, the Associate Director and Graduate Program Director of the School of Social Work at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, is the first professorship award winner from a U.S. university.

Christine Bzdon

Bernice Weissbourd



Dr. Mizanur Rahman Miah

Christine Bzdon, a Voices member and executive director of Child Care Resource and Referral of Will, Grundy, Kendall and Kankakee Counties, recently celebrated her one year anniversary with the Joliet based resource and referral organization.

Maureen Blaha, the director of Illinois Parents Anonymous and a Voices member, recently led the Blue Bow Campaign against child abuse in Illinois. During the month-long campaign, the child abuse prevention crusade was featured in a dozen media reports including the Chicago Sun-Times, WMAQ-TV and WGN-Radio. Voices and Parents Anonymous board member **Bonnie Wheeler** was also instrumental in the statewide campaign. Bonnie co-chaired the public awareness drive and led downstate outreach efforts.

Sr. Stephanie Mertens, a Voices member from Ruma, recently hosted a two-day health and wellness program called "Family Wellness, Families Well into the Future." More than 100 local parents and area residents attended the seminar.

Voices member **Marsha Barton**, a social worker for the DeKalb school district, recently assisted in developing a peer conflict mediation program for third and fourth graders at Jefferson Elementary School. The program is the first of its kind in DeKalb for kids under the age of 14.

Voices Board member **Jeanne Crowley**, a Special Assistant to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, was recently elected to her local school council in Chicago. Jeanne will represent the residents of the Thomas J. Waters Elementary School District on the city's north side.

Kathyrn Harvey, a Voices member from Downers Grove, recently recruited eight new Voices members in one week. Kathyrn is an outspoken child advocate and owns a travel agency in DuPage County.

Voices member **Diane McCarthy** recently set up a local 4H Club for more than 30 neighborhood kids at her church, the Church of Peace United Church of Christ in Rock Island. The group is preparing projects to compete in the upcoming Rock Island County Fair.

To share your news or advocacy efforts, drop a note to **Network News**, Voices for Illinois Children, 208 S. LaSalle St., Suite 1380, Chicago, IL 60604. Or fax us at (312) 456-0088.

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(Continued from page 13)

Child Support Enforcement

Two Voices-endorsed ideas will soon be helping children across the state receive the nearly $200 million in child support that goes uncollected every year.

A Department of Public Aid initiative will avoid costly and time consuming court cases by establishing volunteer paternity administratively instead of through costly court procedures.

A second measure, approved by the legislature, establishes a work group to develop a system of identifying when parents owing child support finds work or change jobs.

By simply requiring all Illinois employers to send the state W-4's of all new hires within 20 days of employment, the state can save millions of dollars.

In the first year of a similar program run in Massachusetts, an additional $14.3 million in child support was collected and more 1,872 children moved off the welfare rolls. This saved Massachusetts more than $21 million dollars in unnecessary welfare payments.

Early Childhood Care and Education

Two legislative proposals supported by Voices, the Day Care Action Council and others in the statewide coalition that assisted the Governor's Work Group on Early Childhood, were not called for a vote during the pre-election year session.

The measures -- known as SUCCEED [Steps to Unite Child Care and Early Education Demonstration] and Thriving Children, Striving Families -- were aimed at improving the quality and increasing the availability of early education and child care programs.

"This battle is far from over," Voices President Jerry Stermer said. "Illinois parents deserve an all-day, year-round combination of both quality early education and child care. These are critical factors in ensuring a child's success in school and parents' success in finding and keeping jobs."

Children's Health Insurance

The legislature considered but failed to act on a proposal that would have required health insurers regulated by the state to provide full coverage for basic preventive services such as immunizations and lead screening for children under the age of six.

Currently only about half of insurance plans cover comprehensive primary care for children.

Welfare

Although a number of bills were introduced to improve the chances that adult welfare recipients could enroll in education and training programs, no major changes were adopted.

In approving the budget for the Department of Public Aid, the legislature provided a $40 million increase for child care for families on welfare.

Voluntary HIV Pregnancy Screening

The legislature considered but did not enact a measure requiring health care providers treating pregnant women to offer patients information on the advantages of HIV testing and the ability to reduce passing the disease on to a newborn if infected mothers-to-be receive treatment.

Recent activity on the federal level may require states to provide the information anyway to meet federal requirements.

Family Law

The legislature reviewed ideas for reforming a handful of family law related issues but put the undertaking off until after the upcoming elections.

Public hearings on juvenile justice, divorce and adoption issues are scheduled for this fall.

Non-Profit Gag Rules

The state legislature considered a not-for-profit gag rule resembling the federal measure championed by Congressman Istook this year.

The proposal would have required organizations receiving state funds to provide a review of all political advocacy to all who request information. The concept stalled in Rules Committee, but will most likely be reintroduced next year.

REPORTS ARE AVAILABLE ON MOST OF THESE ISSUES. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL MIKE ROACH AT VOICES, (312) 456-0600.

Advocacy Resources: Do Your Homework

Voices produces many materials that can help us all better advocate for young people. Here's a list of our available resources.

1996 National Kids Count Data Book

Along with breaking down child well-being indicators for each state, the 1996 Kids Count Data Report focuses on the blight of the working poor in America.

•*Complimentary while supplies last.*

Human Services Reform in Illinois: Opportunities, Challenges & A Vision for the 21st Century

This white paper responds to the Governor's proposal to reorganize human services. It also challenges policy makers to stress prevention and community involvement in reform.

•*Complimentary.*

1995 Illinois Kids Count: Building the Future

Along with a county-by-county breakdown of child well-being in Illinois, Kids Count outlines eight strategies that are working to improve the lives of children. The book also recaps an insightful conversation among six child advocacy experts.

•*$12 for members, $15 for non-members.*
A complimentary summary booklet is available.

Dollars and Sense: A Guide to Spending on Children and Families in Illinois

Illinois spends more money reacting to problems than preventing them. This easy-to-understand report on our state financing system guides you through the multitude of numbers to better understand how we invest in our children.

•*$12 for members, $15 for non-members, $3 for appendix of data tables.*

A New Paradigm: Moving Toward Comprehensive Services

This brief white paper calls for a much needed shift from top-down bureaucratic decision making to a partnership among state officials, community leaders and families. New Paradigm is a must read, especially with the governor's recent call for human services restructuring.

•*Complimentary.*

Special Report: Education Finance Reform

This in-depth critique outlines many problems plaguing Illinois' education funding systems and spells out what a successful education finance plan must contain.

•*Complimentary.*

TO ORDER ANY PUBLICATION, CALL ANDREA STRICKLAND AT VOICES, (312) 456-0600.

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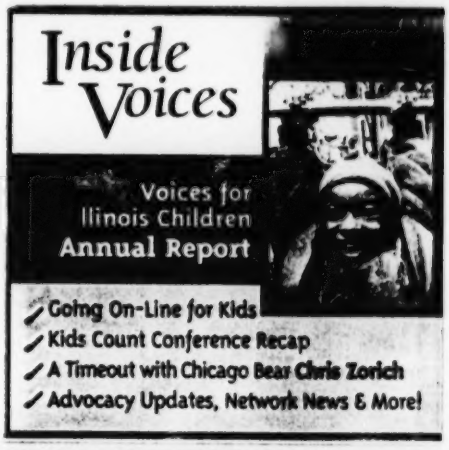
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Early Help Makes 'Kids Count'

Ambar, a smiling 16-year-old who is five months pregnant, listens intently to an enthusiastic Sylvia Schoenwetter, like herself an immigrant from Mexico.

Sylvia is coaching Ambar about her "bebe" in a sing-song Spanish mixed with English: "Si, 24 horas al dia, (yes, 24 hours a day) holidays and weekends, ser una buena mama (that's what it takes to be a good mother). But it's worth it."

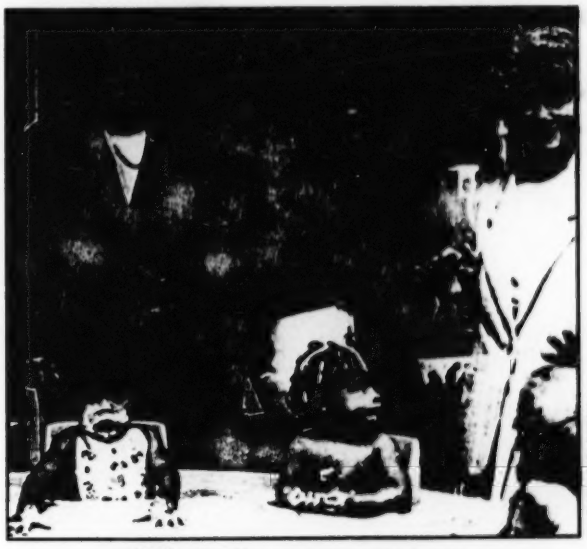
Sylvia is a family support worker for Healthy Families America in Aurora, one of hundreds of "parent support" initiatives that have sprung up since a 1985 demonstration project in Hawaii. In Aurora, the concept is simple: to promote healthy child development and avert child neglect or abuse, provide at-risk first-time moms with a friendly visitor in the home from before the baby is born to three years after birth.

The story of Ambar and Sylvia appears in the new Illinois Kids Count, which focuses on Voices' efforts to publicize the need to start early in every child's life.

"Starting early — by supporting families and nurturing the learning that begins when a baby first enters the world — sets children on the right course for success in school and in life," said Gaylord Gieseke, Voices' senior projects director and a co-chair of the Healthy Family Illinois Work Group. "This group has encouraged the development of similar family support efforts throughout the state."

Sylvia is typical of the Healthy Families approach. She is not a social worker or a psychologist. She's a mom with a good sense for people, appropriate training, a sunny disposition and a drive to help new parents. Studies show that this sort of positive, early intervention pays off in stronger families and safer kids who do better in school.

"In 1996, Illinois lawmakers took a big step... (See EARLY HELP on page 10)



State officials Barb Cimaglio (left) and Maralee Lindley (right) tour the North Main Day Care with Voices' Gaylord Gieseke.

Officials Tour State to Better Human Services

October 9th wasn't your typical day at the office for the controller of the state's purse strings.

Joan Walters, director of the Illinois Bureau of the Budget, was spending time with fellow Illinois cabinet members, but the state's top officials weren't sitting through Springfield meetings or briefing the press, they were laughing and oohing and aahing their way through a game of peek-a-boo with a handful of preschoolers in a Rockford child care classroom.

The visit, just one stop on a seven-day, 92-hour tour through six Illinois communities, brought state officials face-to-face with those most likely to be affected by the state's plan to reorganize six human services departments into one Department of Human Services. (See HUMAN SERVICES on page 6)

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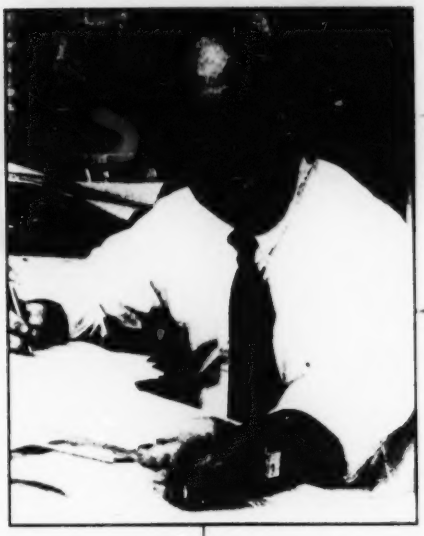


Starting Early Opens Doors

A Column from Voices' President Jerome Stermer

With the Chicago Bulls off to their best start ever, the buzz around the state has turned to the possibility of another championship season.

All of this talk reminds me of the phrase – "from day one" – that Delores Jordan, Michael's mother, is fond of saying.

"From day one" doesn't only apply to winning NBA championships. As Delores Jordan knows, it's a great slogan for child development, as well.

Parents give their children a clear signal about who they are and what is expected of them from day one. A child's all-important sense of self worth is shaped by their earliest experiences. Many times, one of the first lessons children learn is if they're expected to succeed or fail.

From his on-court and off-court work ethic, it's easy to see what Michael Jordan learned from day one.

And it's increasingly clear that starting early opens the door to great possibilities for all of us. New discoveries in the area of human brain development confirm the importance of starting from a child's first days.

These findings, described in-depth by Chicago Tribune writer Ron Kotulak in his book, *Inside The Brain*, make a compelling argument for tilting our public policies towards the earliest years.

The first three years of life are the most critical for brain development and life long patterns of learning and relating, Kotulak writes. Success in school, success at work, success in relationships... are all shaped by our earliest experiences.

This latest batch of research has prompted early childhood advocates like Irving Harris (his book *Children in Jeopardy* is a must-read) and others to call for a re-evaluation of public policy. We need bold new approaches during the first three years of life, Harris argues.

Although Illinois ranks as a national leader in funding early childhood programs, the lion's share of our preschool dollars are spent after a child is past these vital first years. In the coming years, we simply must find creative ways to help children before their third birthdays.

New federal welfare policy brings a pressing urgency to starting early in supporting children. Our hopes that parents can spend more time with their children, especially during the first years, are further dimmed by the new demand that poor mothers work and live with less public assistance.

As this massive transformation begins, we, as child advocates, must be even more diligent about the quality, as well, as the availability of child care.

It's time to put a new spotlight on early childhood. It's time for us to support parents when their children are very young. It's time to support the many wonderful early childhood programs and professionals across Illinois who help children get off to a good start. It's time to expand public support for early childhood.

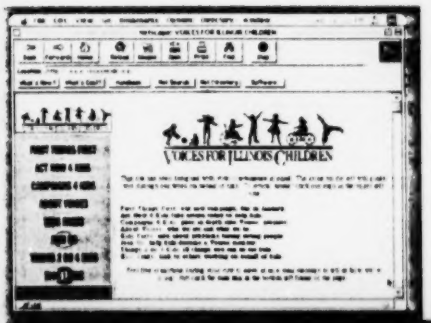
It's time to heed Mrs. Jordan's advice and start "from day one."

Jerry Stermer

"The first three years of life are the most critical for brain development and life long patterns of learning.

Success in school, success at work, success in relationships... are all shaped by our earliest experiences."

Conference, Forums Make Kids Count



http://www.voices4kids.org

Now help kids on-line. Visit our web site at for the most up-to-date Voices' advocacy efforts.

Chicagoan Anne Strohm was swamped on Sept. 23 with meetings and work, but the clinical psychologist knew she wanted to attend Voices' Making Kids Count Leadership Conference, for at least a session or two.

"It's vital all of us working for kids get together around the same table from time to time," Strohm said. "No matter how hectic our schedules."

Strohm was one of more than 273 Illinoisans from all over the state who attended the day-long conference at the University of Chicago's downtown conference center.

Parents, volunteers, board members, corporate vice presidents and other concerned advocates attended breakout and plenary sessions covering a wide variety of child-related topics such as community collaboration, media relations, working with legislators and school financing.

Conference plenary speakers included Family Focus founder Bernice Weissbourd, Chicago journalists Dianne Donovan and Linda Yu, professional football player Chris Zorich, Sokoni Karanja, president of the Center for New Horizons and a round table discussion with five young people.

Although Strohm took in only one conference session, she was so impressed with the day, she became a Voices' member.

"There's just so many of us out there working on behalf of children, in so many different fields and organizations," Strohm said. "We definitely need days like today. They revitalize us and keep us connected. All of us — policy makers, researchers and day-to-day service providers — can be much more effective when we work together."

Partially supported by AT&T and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the conference also marked the public debut of Voices' world wide web site [www.voices4kids.org].

"The day was about mobilizing a statewide network of local child advocates," Voices President Jerome Stermer said.

In addition to the conference, Voices sponsored Making Kids Count Community Forums before the November elections in homes and community centers throughout the state.

The forums, which involved candidates running for state office, were held in Joliet, Evanston, Quincy, Urbana and in at least 16 other communities. The gatherings were designed to engage all of us — parents, elected officials, volunteers and business leaders — in discussions about solutions to the problems facing children.

"These forums are just one more way people across the state can get involved in their communities to help kids," Lynne Mitchell, Voices Advocacy Coordinator, said.

Chicago news anchor Linda Yu recalls the many people who touched her life as a child.

Conference panel moderator Aaron Freeman (center) and panelists Katie Lyons and Willie Henry react to a comment during the "conversation with the future" plenary session.

Della Alfred makes a point during a break-out session

Membership Has Many Faces

Our members join for countless different reasons. We thought you'd like to take a peak at a few of them.

"I want all kids to one day enjoy reading as much as I do. Voices is working to make all kids count. That's why I'm a member."

Jill Brennan
Chicago

"I joined Voices to ensure that every child's voice, including my twin grandsons, is as loud as a lion's roar. Together we can do it."

Jane Thomas
Barrington

"Children, mine, my family's — everyone's, are our state and nation's most important resource. I need to know the facts to best advocate for their needs. Voices keeps me connected and informed."

Peg Callaghan
Hinsdale

"I am a voice for Illinois' children because childhood is precious and vulnerable. Together we can give children the protection and support they deserve."

Jeffery P. Bright
Chicago

"Kids can't vote and many times go unheard. I'm a Voices' member so my daughters and all kids get the things they need to grow up happy and healthy."

Micki Chulick
Dekalb

"Every child deserves a fresh start in life and Voices is working for my new born son and all kids in Illinois."

Jeanne Crowley
Chicago

Share Your Voice

To share your reason for being a Voice for Illinois Children, mail your snapshot to:

My Voice
Voices for Illinois Children
208 S. LaSalle St., Suite 1380
Chicago, Illinois 60604

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Advocacy Update: Working on Behalf of Kids

Voices for Illinois Children works on a variety of advocacy causes. Here are briefings on a few of our on-going efforts.

Education funding: Back to the General Assembly

A recent Illinois Supreme Court decision to dismiss a lawsuit about funding public education reinforces the responsibility of state legislators to take action on school financing, notes Voices' Project Director Ami Nagle.

Public education is funded through a combination of state, federal and local funds. The lawsuit — brought by local school superintendents, students and parents — challenged the state's way of funding education. In Illinois, almost 60 percent of school funding comes from local sources like property taxes— which means school districts have very different levels of funds they can spend.

"For far too long, many schools have been forced to overcrowd classes, drop extra-curriculars and let teachers go," Nagle says. "State lawmakers must make changes that generate enough funding to adequately support all schools and help relieve the burdens faced by property-tax payers."

"Illinois has had enough quick-fixes and stop-gap solutions," she continues. "Students and taxpayers deserve well-planned, long-term improvements."

Illinois passes on cutting 'pass-through'

In a move supported by Voices, Illinois will continue to provide families receiving AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) with the first $50 of child support collected on their behalf.

"This decision signals Illinois' commitment to helping move families from welfare-to work," Voices' President Jerome Stermer says. "Maintaining this policy will help nearly 19,000 families around the state who are playing by the rules and assisting in the collection of child support."

The federal welfare law allows states to eliminate the $50 "pass-through."

Stermer applauds Governor Edgar's decision to keep the pass-through intact and notes that creating affordable, quality child care and early education; ensuring affordable, accessible health care; and assuring that appropriate job training is available will also go a long way to helping low-income families move to self-sufficiency.

'Getting tough' through prevention

The most effective way to reduce youth crime is by investing in programs directed at children *before* they become delinquent or serious violent offenders, Voices' Board Member Frank Kopecky recently testified.

"Dealing with youth crime solely by adopting 'get-tough' policies addresses the problem too late and is too costly," Kopecky told the state Legislative Committee on Juvenile Justice.

Citing reports which note that early intervention and prevention strategies are effective at reducing crime, Kopecky called for:

- voluntary early childhood home visitation and parental education for at-risk children
- parental efforts to improve early childhood education and to keep children in school
- efforts to supervise and provide counseling to youth who exhibit delinquent tendencies
- the development of before-school after-school programs.

"Voices believes that investing in youth and community-based prevention and early intervention programs are critical to achieving both goals — helping youth and ensuring public safety," Kopecky stated.

'Whose Side Are You On?'

Voices is working throughout the state to help get a new advertising campaign for kids up and running. The ads — which ask "Whose Side Are You On?" — challenge each of us to help children and their families by getting involved locally.

The campaign — developed by the Ad Council, the Benton Foundation and the Coalition for America's Children — urges viewers to call for ways to get involved in helping children. Voices, as a member of the Coalition, is serving as a statewide source for volunteer opportunities.

If you have volunteer opportunities in your community, drop us a note at

"WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?"
C/O VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN
208 S. LASALLE ST., SUITE 1580,
CHICAGO, IL 60604.
OR CALL **(312) 456-0600.**
OR E-MAIL US AT **info@voices4kids.org.**

The 'Whose Side Are You On?' written PSA.

(HUMAN SERVICES continued from front page)

In each community, officials spent around 13 hours gathering first-hand input from local business leaders, community officials, and those receiving and providing services in places like North Main Day Care in Rockford.

Each community visit was capped with a public Town Meeting.

The tour was sponsored by the Campaign for Illinois Communities — a private-public partnership among Voices, the Governors Task Force on Human Services Reform, Kraft Foods, the North Central Regional Education Laboratory, United Way of Illinois, the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, the Illinois Community Action Association and Project Success.

At a church in Springfield, state officials listened as a self-described "former welfare recipient" described how she worked her way up to "working poor" only to earn $60 too much to qualify for food stamps.

"We're scared," she said speaking for herself and fellow church members struggling in similar situations. "We're scared and we need as much help moving (from welfare) as possible."

After touring the narrow halls of a temporary housing shelter in East St. Louis, a young mother told state officials about the long waiting lists she faced for public housing.

In Chicago, Audrey McCrimon, director of the state's rehabilitation services, listened as people with disabilities described the challenges of finding housing and getting to and from work.

None of the visits were typical days at the office for the cabinet members, but that's exactly, they stressed, why they were there — to change the typical way of doing business here in Illinois.

They repeated five goals at each stop:

- provide the best possible service by addressing the complete needs of individuals or families;
- consolidate similar programs and functions and eliminate fragmented or inconsistent requirements for clients and providers;
- consolidate information management functions and establish a coordinated intake and tracking system;
- provide accountability by working closely with communities to structure programs to meet local needs; and
- maximize prevention and intervention resources by streamlining bureaucracy.

"Illinois is changing the way human services are delivered to children, families, the elderly and people with disabilities," Gaylord Gieseke, Voices senior projects director, said. "These 92 hours gave top state officials an opportunity to listen and learn from the real people who know first hand what works and doesn't work here in Illinois."

In addition to the community visits, state officials invited people to get involved with numerous interagency committees which will examine "customer service approaches," "service delivery regions," "program evaluation" and other reorganization related issues.

Voices' work on the Campaign for Illinois Communities is partially supported by Kraft Foods, the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation and the Freddie Mac Foundation.

THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Will be established: **July 1, 1997**

Budget: **About $4.1 billion**

Employees: **About 19,500**

Will combine: **All of the Departments** of:

- *Mental Health & Developmental Disabilities*
- *Rehabilitation Services*
- *Substance Abuse*

And also: **Parts of the Departments** of:

- *Public Aid* (including cash assistance, employment, social service programs, field staff, operations & day care services)
- *Public Health* (including Individual & family health & prevention related services)
- *Children and Family Services* (including child care & youth services)

Guiding Principles

Feedback sheets were distributed at each Town Meeting. From the 456 surveys returned, participants checked these as the top six principles:

The Department of Human Services should be easy to navigate and customer driven.

The system should be community based, recognize local needs and be

state and local agencies should partner with the

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Voices for Illinois Children: Making Kids Count

Illinois should be a place where all children can thrive — a place where the basic needs of all children, families and communities are met. Illinois should be a place where all children are well-nurtured and well educated, beginning in the very early years and continuing throughout young adulthood. Illinois should be a place where all children are safe, healthy, and free of discrimination and poverty.

Illinois should be a place where kids count.

Voices for Illinois Children is dedicated to making this vision become a reality. For this to happen, each of of us must take a part in building our future — an endeavor requiring time, energy and commitment. But that's exactly what's necessary if we ever truly expect to say that kids count in our communities and throughout our state.

Annual Report

We must ensure that our children have every opportunity to achieve to the limits of their ambition and talents. Voices for Illinois Children is helping to make that possible.

– editorial, The Moline Daily Dispatch

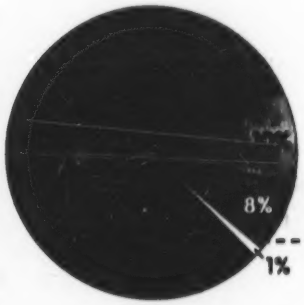
VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN

Annual Report

Statement of Support, Revenue, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance for the year ending December 31, 1995

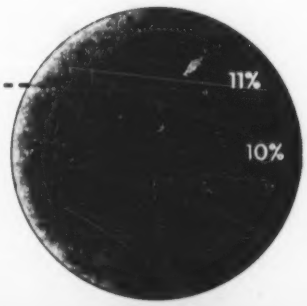
Support and Revenue	1995
Contributions:	
Foundations and Corporations	674,260
Individuals and Directors	69,539
Benefit - net	124,031
Total Contributed Support	**867,830**
Other Revenue	
Interest Income	8,124
Miscellaneous	3,154
Total Other Revenue	**11,278**
Total Contributed Support and Other Revenue	**879,108**
Expenditures	
General Administrative	80,211
Fundraising	92,392
Program Policy and Public Education	682,286
Total Expenditures	**854,889**
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenue Over Expenditures	24,219
Fund balance beginning	**179,754**
Fund balance ending	**203,973**

A copy of the full audit is available from VIC's development office



1995 Income

Foundations 67%
Corporations 10%
Individuals 8%
Benefit 14%
Other Revenue 1%



1995 Expenditures

Program Policy & Public Education 79%
General Administrative 10%
Fundraising 11%

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In 1987, a group of leaders from the civic, business, community, academic and philanthropic realms joined forces to create a voice for the children of Illinois. Today, Voices for Illinois Children is an organization of people who are working to make kids count throughout our state — working to help all children grow up well educated, safe, well nurtured and healthy. Voices is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization solely supported by private donations from corporations, foundations and individuals.

Voices wishes to acknowledge and thank the individuals, corporations and foundations that have made generous contributions to support our work on behalf of children. The list on the following pages includes contributions made during 1995. We regret that space limitations prevent us from including the names of hundreds of other people across the state who volunteer their time and talents to help Voices pursue our mission.

FOUNDERS

Six foundations provided the initial funding for Voices:

- The Chicago Community Trust
- Colman Fund for the Well Being of Children & Youth
- Prince Charitable Trusts
- Woods Charitable Fund, Inc.
- Field Foundation of Illinois Inc.
- The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation

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Your Voice: Take the Time for Kids

By Chris Zorich

Chris Zorich, an outspoken child advocate and pro football player for the Chicago Bears, was born and raised in an impoverished neighborhood on Chicago's south side. He founded the Christopher Zorich Foundation in 1993 to honor the memory of his mother, Zora, a single parent who struggled to raise Chris on a $250/month Public Aid check. Chris, who begins law school in the Spring and plans to be a full-time advocate after football, told this story at Voices' Making Kids Count Conference.

You don't have to dedicate your life to helping children or play pro football to make a difference in a child's life. Through my work with kids, especially Big Brothers/Big Sisters, I hear countless stories about everyday folks making a difference. This is one of my favorites.

A young executive had volunteered to be a big brother and was nervous about the whole concept. He felt he was kind of roped into the deal and after setting up his first visit to meet his assigned little brother, he wanted to cancel it.

"What do I have to offer some kid?" he thought. "What will I say to him? What will we do together?"

The Saturday of reckoning came and although feeling uncomfortable, the young man went anyway. He dressed quickly in a white turtle neck, red sweater and blue jeans and set off for the boy's home.

When he knocked at the door, this beautiful little child appeared. The two hung out for a while. Both felt nervous. The beautiful little child said little and after 20 minutes or so, the young man left, feeling as awkward as when he arrived.

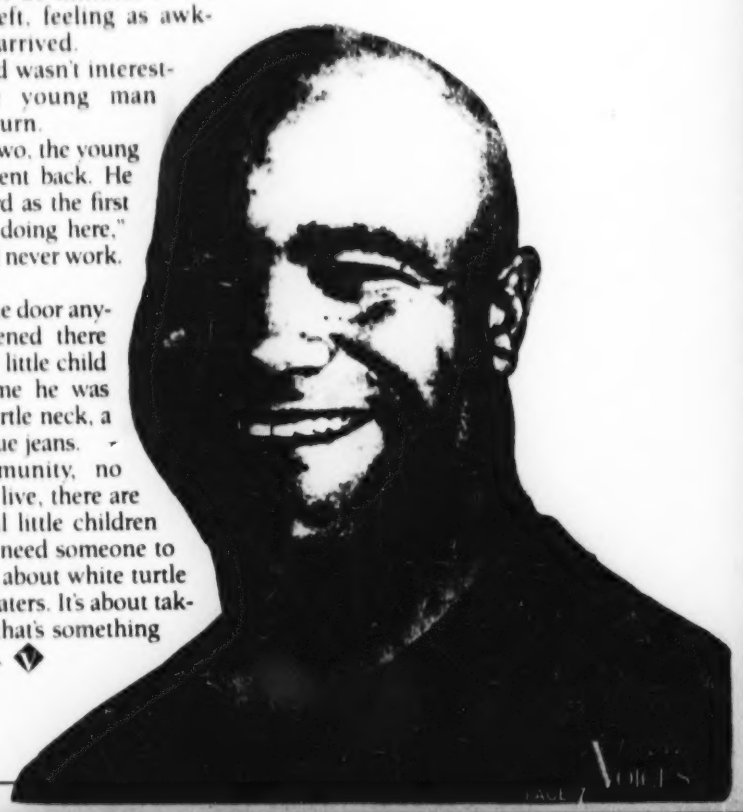
Certain the child wasn't interested in him, the young man planned not to return.

After a week or two, the young man reluctantly went back. He felt just as awkward as the first visit. "What am I doing here," he thought. "This'll never work. I must be nuts."

He knocked at the door anyway. When it opened there stood the beautiful little child again. But this time he was wearing a white turtle neck, a red sweater and blue jeans.

In every community, no matter where you live, there are countless beautiful little children like this one who need someone to look up to. It isn't about white turtle necks and red sweaters. It's about taking the time and that's something all of us can spare.

"No matter where you live, there are countless beautiful little children who need someone to look up to."



Network News:
Advocates Speak Up for Kids

Illinoisans are working in all corners of the state to help children. Here is a round up of where some Voices members, volunteers and friends are making a difference for kids.

AURORA

Judy Stratman, advocacy coordinator of Hesed House, a not-for-profit coalition of religious ministries serving the poor of the Fox Valley Area, recently helped organize a rally at the State Capitol in Springfield for National Homeless Persons Memorial Day.

BLOOMINGTON

Nancy Ronquillo, executive director of the Children's Foundation and Voices board member, recently joined the McClain County Community Advocacy Network, a broad based community effort designed to improve the lives of children by eliminating child abuse. More than 40 area organizations are involved in the local collaborative effort.

CHAMPAIGN

Judy Lewis, director of Project 18, a community collaborative effort for kids, recently released the Champaign County Community Report Card. The report card outlines the status of child well being in the greater Champaign/Urbana area.

CHICAGO

Susan Herr was recently named the director of the Children, Youth and Families Initiative at the Chicago Community Trust. She joins the Trust as Senior Staff Associate from her post as Campaign Director for Youth Vision, a group working to promote the positive things young people do throughout Chicago.

Long-time child advocates and Voices supporters ***Joan*** and ***Irving Harris*** were featured in an in-depth article and Q&A in the fall issue of Chicago Philanthropy, a magazine focusing on grantmaking and grantseeking in Chicago and throughout the Midwest.

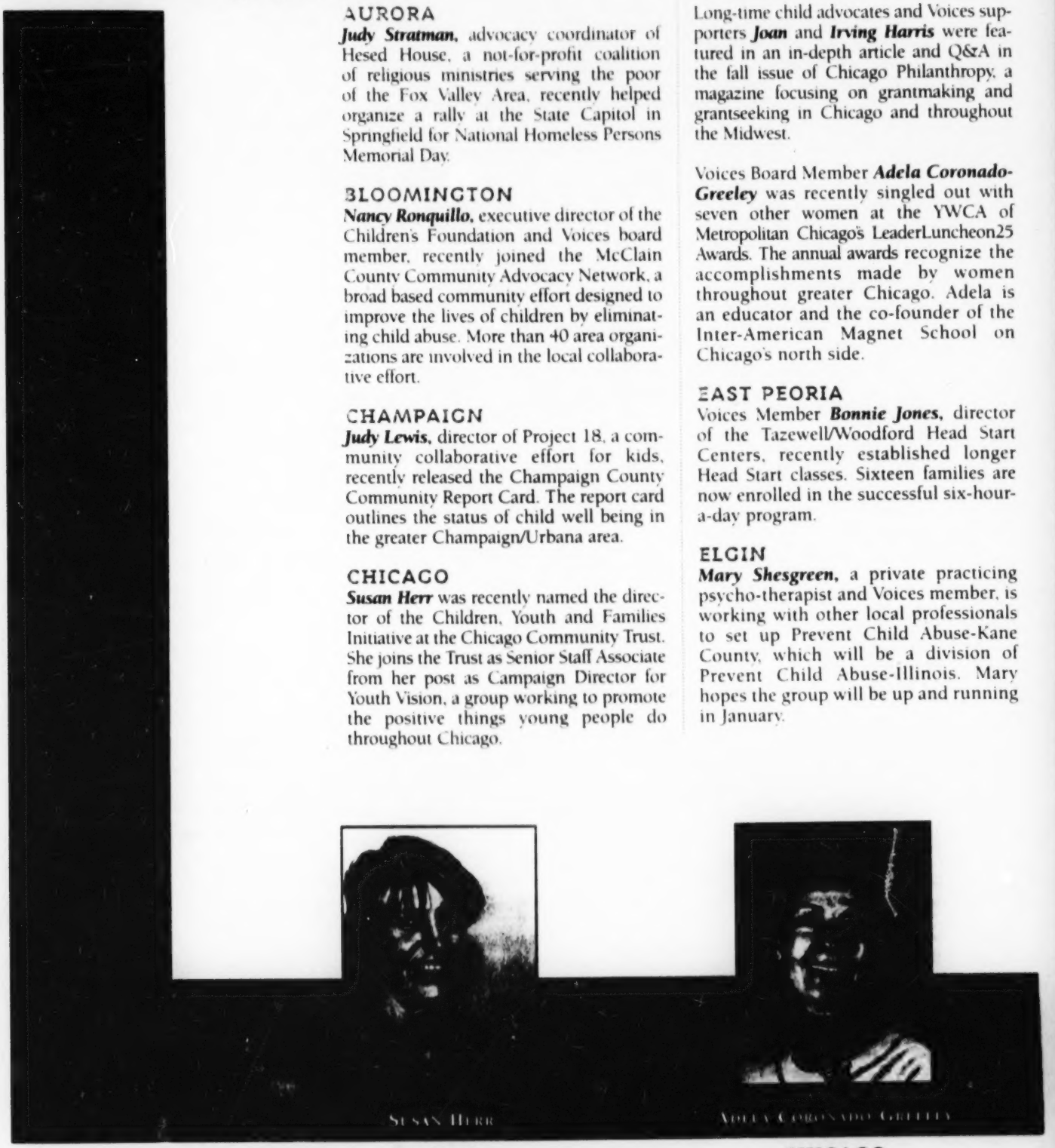
Voices Board Member ***Adela Coronado-Greeley*** was recently singled out with seven other women at the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago's LeaderLuncheon25 Awards. The annual awards recognize the accomplishments made by women throughout greater Chicago. Adela is an educator and the co-founder of the Inter-American Magnet School on Chicago's north side.

EAST PEORIA

Voices Member ***Bonnie Jones,*** director of the Tazewell/Woodford Head Start Centers, recently established longer Head Start classes. Sixteen families are now enrolled in the successful six-hour-a-day program.

ELGIN

Mary Shesgreen, a private practicing psycho-therapist and Voices member, is working with other local professionals to set up Prevent Child Abuse-Kane County, which will be a division of Prevent Child Abuse-Illinois. Mary hopes the group will be up and running in January.



SUSAN HERR — CHICAGO

ADELA CORONADO GREELEY — CHICAGO

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SALISBURG

At 73-years-young, Voices Member ***Janet Lotz*** works part-time at the Hope Head Start Centers as a consulting psychologist. "As long as I can get down on the floor and sit criss-cross applesauce with the kids I'm gonna keep going," the 36-year veteran of child psychology said.

HARVEY

Cheryl Brown, Voices member and president of the Metropolitan Chicago Synodical Women's Organization, hosted an advocacy convention for more than 125 Chicago area members of the Women of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at the Ramada Inn in Harvey in October.

JOLIET

Voices Member ***Carol Simler,*** director of the family support center of the Catholic Charity Daybreak Center, assisted in the development of the Center's recently added transitional housing program that can accommodate up to 15 homeless families headed by single mothers.

Michael Hennessy, the Executive Director of the United Way of Will County, recently hosted forums on welfare reform and state human service reorganization. About 60 representatives from Will County's business and not-for-profit community attended the local discussions.

LAGRANGE

Liz Tertell, the training coordinator for the Early Childhood Professional Project at National-Louis University, facilitated a recent seminar on the importance of child advocacy for the directors of child care centers. The course was funded in part by the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation and the American Business Collaboration for Quality Dependent Care.

MAKANDA

Voices member and retiring U.S. Senator ***Paul Simon*** will return home to Illinois in January to teach, write and run a newly formed public policy think tank named for him at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

METTAWA

Long-time Voices supporter ***Bill Kurtis*** recently narrated Voices' *Learning to Fly* video, which highlights the importance of quality early childhood care and education. Kurtis, who calls both Mettawa, just outside of Libertyville, and Chicago home, is an anchor at the Chicago CBS Affiliate WBBM-TV Channel 2.

QUINCY

Recently re-elected State Representative and Voices Member ***Art Tenhouse*** attended a Voices' Making Kids Count Community Forum organized by Voices Board Member Jeanette Bitter and other local organizations.

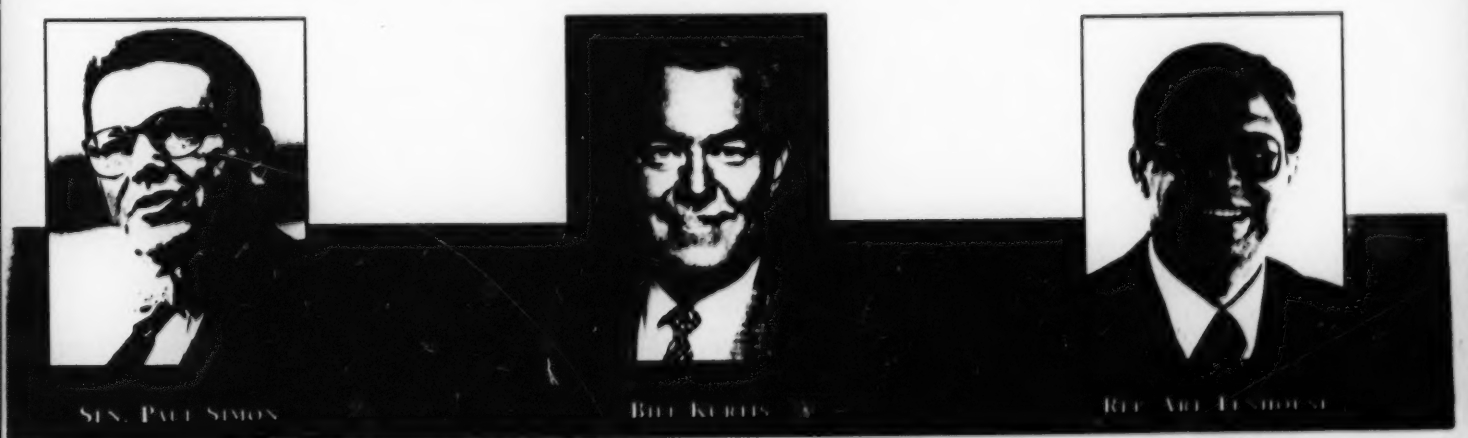
ROCKFORD

Voices member ***Ruth Little,*** the executive director of the Rock River Valley Council of the Girl Scouts of the USA, helped develop an interactive domestic violence prevention program, called Girl Friends. Through the program, seven 11-15 year olds go twice a month to a local battered families shelter where they peer counsel children affected by violence.

SPRING VALLEY

Voices member ***Dr. Mary Wells,*** superintendent of School District 99, will host a town hall meeting in early January to discuss the importance of technology in her community.

To share your news or advocacy efforts, drop a note to:
NETWORK NEWS, VOICES FOR ILLINOIS CHILDREN
208 S. LASALLE ST., SUITE 1580
CHICAGO, IL 60604,
OR FAX US AT (312) 456-0088.



SEN. PAUL SIMON BILL KURTIS REP. ART TENHOUSE

MAKANDA METTAWA QUINCY

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(EARLY HELP continued from front page)

forward in helping children by enacting a new law that allows mothers and their newborns to begin on the right foot by staying in the hospital for up to 48 hours if they need to," noted Voices President Jerome Stermer. "Now, the challenge is before all of us in Illinois to make sure that we help children and their families from the first 48 hours throughout those early, important years before school."

What community leaders, policy makers and individuals can do to support families and nurture this critical early learning is the focus of the new Illinois Kids Count report.

The study describes real-life examples of people across Illinois who are working to make kids count by supporting families; providing quality early education and child care; ensuring that children receive quality health care; pushing for fairer funding of public education; working to improve collaborative efforts on the community level; and involving business in efforts to help families move to self-sufficiency.

"All of us — parents, business leaders, elected officials and retirees — have a role to play in making kids count in Illinois," Stermer said.

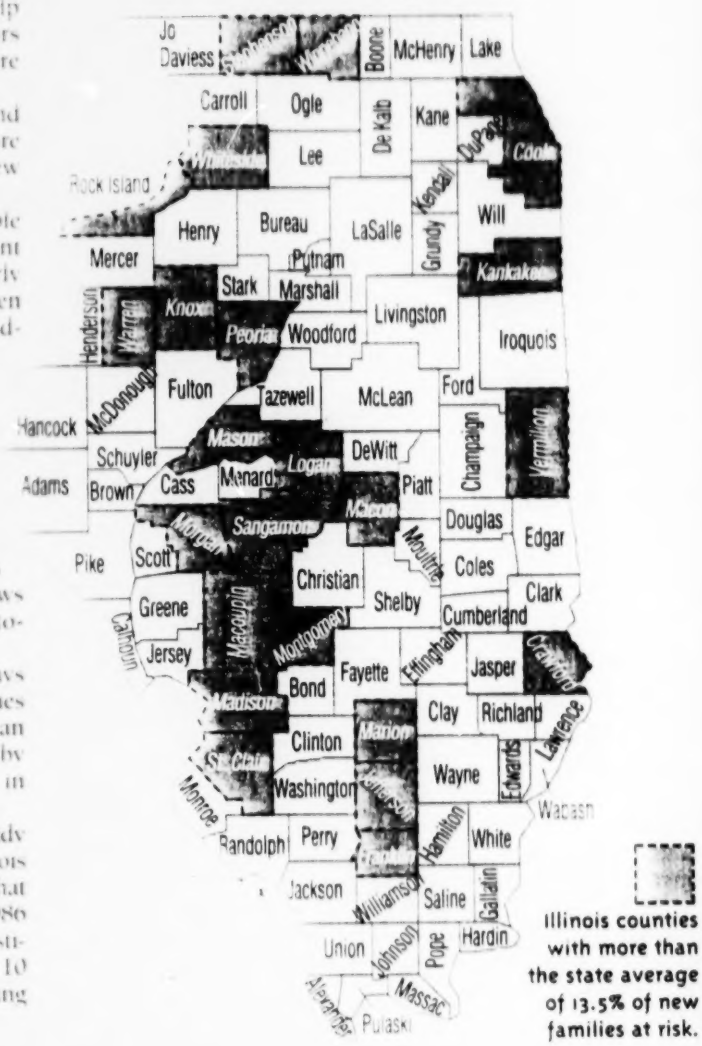
Along with breaking down statistics of child well-being for all 105 counties in Illinois, this years Kids Count contains one-on-one interviews with child advocacy experts and short success stories like Healthy Families America in Aurora.

Karen Turk, director of the Aurora program, says the magic of the healthy families approach comes not from fancy techniques but woman-to-woman contact and empathy, the kind once provided by neighbors getting together or their equivalent in villages around the globe.

This framework may be crucial to reverse steady growth in reported child abuse and neglect in Illinois and the nation. A 1996 federal study found that abuse or neglect cases nearly doubled between 1986 and 1993, to more than 2.8 million. Illinois investigated 136,000 cases in 1994, up dramatically over 10 years and tragically including 88 deaths. Very young children, studies say, are most at risk.

New Families at Risk

Births to single, teen mothers who have not completed high school.



Illinois counties with more than the state average of 13.5% of new families at risk.

"Starting early — by supporting families and nurturing the learning that begins when a baby first enters the world — sets children on the right course for success in school and in life."

Voices' Success Starts Young speakers bureau is looking for a few outspoken advocates, quite-a-few podiums and a slew of televisions to spread the word about the importance of early education and child care. To volunteer your time, next meeting or VCR, call Mike Roach at Voices, (312) 456-0600.

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Advocacy Resources:
Know Your Facts

Voices produces materials that can help us all better advocate for young people. Here's a list of our available resources.

Learning to Fly Video
This 12-minute video highlights the importance of quality early childhood education and care.
•*$10 for members; $12 for non-members.*
A few copies are available on loan.

Special Report: Welfare Reform
This easy-to-read eight-page report reviews the impact of welfare reform on children.
•*Complimentary.*

Illinois Kids Count:
Rising to the Challenge
This new report breaks down child well-being statistics by county and outlines ideas working to improve the lives of children.
•*$12 for members; $15 for non-members.*
A complimentary summary is available.

Special Report:
Education Finance Reform
This critique reviews the problems plaguing Illinois' education funding systems and lists the components of a successful school finance plan.
•*Complimentary.*

Human Services Reform in Illinois:
Opportunities, Challenges and A Vision for the 21st Century
This timely white paper challenges policy makers to stress prevention and community involvement in the reorganization of human services.
•*Complimentary.*

1993 Illinois Kids Count:
Building the Future
Along with county breakdowns of child well-being in Illinois, this report outlines eight strategies helping children.
•*Free for members. Now only $5 for non-members.*
A complimentary summary is available.

Special Report:
FY1997 Budget Overview
This resource goes between the lines to assess the budget's yearly impact on kids.
•*Complimentary.*

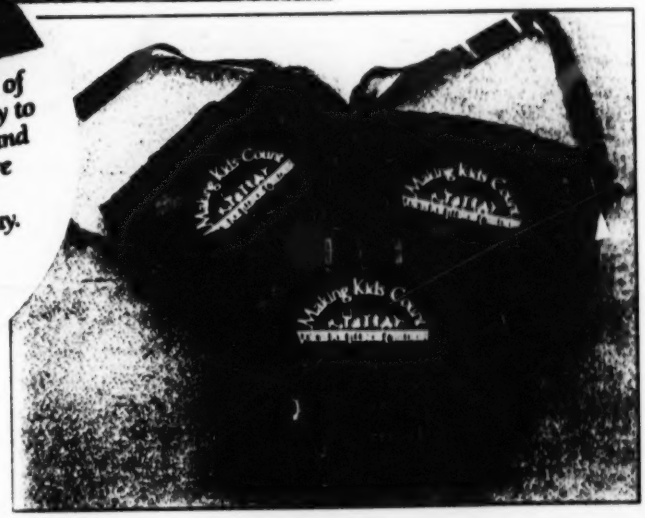
Dollars and Sense:
A Guide to Spending on Children & Families in Illinois
An in-depth investigation into state finances, this primer reveals how Illinois spends more money reacting to rather than preventing problems.
•*Free for members. Now only $5.*

A New Paradigm:
Moving Toward Comprehensive Services
This white paper calls for a much needed shift from top-down decision making to a partnership among state officials, community leaders and families.
•*Complimentary.*

TO ORDER ANY PUBLICATION, CALL ANDREA STRICKLAND AT VOICES, (312) 456-0600.

You Can Take it with You

Our new Making Kids Count brief cases, made of durable-water resistant fabric, are a perfect way to keep all of your advocacy work together, dry and organized. The bags are $28. Quantities are limited, so call Andrea Strickland at (312) 456-0600 to order your case today.



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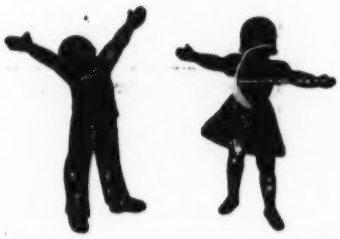

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